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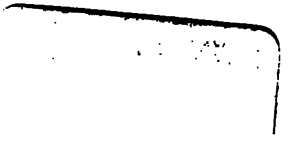
WOODLAND PATHS

WINTHROP PACKARD



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Six ducks swung over my head in the ros

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WOODLAND PATHS

BY

WINTHROP PACKARD

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES COPELAND

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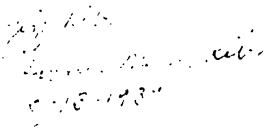
Entered at Stationers' Hall

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A.



THE author wishes to express his thanks to the "Boston Transcript" for permission to reprint in this volume matter which was originally contributed to its columns.

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SOUTH RAIN

SOUTH RAIN

THE night was dark and bitter cold, though it was early March. Over in the dismal depths of Pigeon Swamp, where no pigeons have nested for nearly a half century though it is as wild and lone today as it was when they flocked there by thousands, a deep-toned, lonely cry resounded. It was like the fitful baying of a dog in the distance, only that it was too wild and eerie for that. Then there was silence for a space and an eldritch screech rang out.

It was blood-curdling to a human listener, but it was reassuring to the great horned owl snuggling down on her two great blotched eggs to keep them secure

from the cold, for it was the voice of her mate hunting. Sailing silently on bat-like wings he was beating the open spaces of the wood, hoping to find a partridge at roost, and I fancy the deep "whoo; hoo, hoo, hoo; whoo, whoo," all on the same note, was a grumble that trained dogs and pump-guns are making the game birds so scarce. Perhaps that blood-curdling screech was one of triumph over the sudden death of a rabbit, for *Bubo virginiana* is tremendously rapacious and will eat any living thing which he can carry away in his claws.

It might, too, have been his method of expressing ecstasy over the nest and the promise of spring which the horned owl alone has the courage to anticipate with nest-building in these raw and barren days, when winter seemingly still has his grip firmly set on us. Oftentimes his

housekeeping arrangements are completed by late February. No other bird does that in Massachusetts, though farther north the Canada jay also lays eggs about that time, way up near the Arctic Circle where the thermometer registers zero or below and the snow is deep on the ground.

On what trees he cuts the notches of the passing days I do not know, but surely the horned owl's almanac is as reliable as the Old Farmer's, and he knows the nearness of the spring. I dare say the other birds which winter with us know it too, though not being so big and husky they do not venture to give hostages to the enemy quite so early in the season. The barred owls will build in late March, and soon after April fool's day the woodcock will be stealing north and placing queer, pointed, blotched eggs in some little hollow just above high water in the swamp.

The crows are cannier still. You will hardly find eggs in their nests hereabouts before the fifteenth of April, and you will do well to postpone your hunting till the twenty-fifth. Yet they all know, as well as I do, when the spring is near, and I think I have the secret of the message which has come to them. It is not the fact that a south wind has blown, for this may happen at any time during the winter, but it is something that reaches them on the wings of this same south wind.

This night on which the horned owl of Pigeon Swamp brooded her eggs so carefully was lighted by the moon, but toward midnight a purple blackness grew up all about the still sky and blotted out all things in a velvety smear that sent even Bubo to perch beside his mate. There was then no breath of wind. The faint air from the north that had brought the

deep chill had faltered and died, leaving its temperature behind it over all the fields and forest. The air stung and the ground rang like tempered steel beneath the foot, yet you had but to listen or breathe deep to know what was coming. The stroke of twelve from the distant steeple brought a resonance of romance along the clear miles and the air left in your nostrils a quality that never winter air had a right to hold. To one who knows the temper of the open field and the forest by day and night the promise was unmistakable, though so subtle as to be difficult to define.

Whether it was sound or smell or both I knew then that a south wind was coming, bearing on its balmy breath those spicy, amorous odors of the tropics that come to our frozen land only when spring is on the way. The goddess scatters perfumes from her garments as she comes

and the south wind catches them and bears them to us in advance of her footsteps. You may sniff these same odors of March far offshore along the West Indies, — spicy, intoxicating scents, borne from the hearts of tropic wild-flowers and floating off to sea on every breeze.

With them floats that wonderful grape-bloom tint that touches the surface of all the waters to northward of these islands with its velvety softness, the currents carrying it ever northward and eastward, sometimes almost to the shores of the British Isles. You may see it all about you in mid-ocean as your vessel steams from New York to Liverpool or Southampton or Havre or the Hook of Holland. Some essence of all this gets into the air on the southerly gales that are borne in the windward islands and whirl up along our coast to die finally in

Newfoundland or Labrador or Greenland itself. I believe the horned owl knows it as well as I do and begins his nest-building at the first sniff.

At daybreak the wind had begun to blow, all the keen chill was softened out of the air, and blobs of rain blurred the southern window panes. The temperature had risen already above freezing and was still on the upward path. There was in all the atmosphere that rich, cool freshness that comes with rain-clouds blown far over seas. It is the same quality which we get in an east rain, but it had in it also that suggestion of spiciness and that soft purple haze which drifts away from the tropic islands that border the Caribbean. Stopping a moment in my study before going out into this, I found another creature that had felt the faint call of spring and answered it, I fear, too

soon. This was a great *Samia cecropia* moth. The night before he had been safely tucked away in his cocoon over my mantel, where I had hung it last December.

In the night he had answered the call and now was perched outside his cell, gently expanding his wings with pulsing motions that seemed tremulous with eagerness or delight. I noted the soft delicacy of the coloring in his rich, fur-surfaced body and wings, shades which are reds and grays and browns and ashes of roses, and a score of others so dainty and delicate that we have no words to describe or define them.

A wonderful creature this to appear in a man's house, sit poised on his mantel and blink serenely at him, as if the man himself were the intruder and the room the usual habitat of creatures out of fairy-

land. I studied him carefully, thinking, indeed, that he might vanish at any moment, and then I went out into the woods in the soft south rain, only to find that his colors that I thought so marvelous in the shadow of the four walls of my room were reproduced in rich profusion all about me.

His velvety-white markings, lined and touched off with brown so deep in places as to be either purple with density or black, were those of the birch trunks all about me, and there were the rufous tints that shaded down into pearl pinks and lavender all through the groups of distant birch twigs. His gray fur was the softest and richest of the fur of the gray squirrels, and this gray again shaded into red in spots that could be matched only by the fur of the red squirrel. There were soft tans on him of varying shades,

from rich to delicate pale, and all the last year's leaves and grasses had them. Nor was there a color about him which was not matched and repeated a thousand fold in bark and twigs and lichens and shadows all through the wood.

I had but to stand by with the great moth in my mind's eye to see the whole woodland bursting from its cocoon and spreading its wings for flight. As a matter of fact that is what it is going to do later — but the time is not yet. Meanwhile the south rain was washing its colors clear and laying bare their bright beauty. In it you saw without question the promise of new growth and new life. Trees and shrubs stood like school children with shining morning faces, newly washed for the coming session. All trace of dinginess was gone. The yellow freckles on the brown cheeks of the wild cherry gleamed

from far; the pale, olive green tint of the willow's complexion was transparent in its new-found brilliancy.

Looking down on the ruddy glow of healthy maple twigs, it seemed as if they should have yellow hair and sunny blue eyes, so rich is the coloring of these Saxons of the wood and so fresh it shone under the ministering rain. Even the dour scrub oaks, surly Ethiopians, were not so black as they have been painted all winter, but lost their ebon tint in a hue of rich dark green that was a pleasing foil to the cecropia-moth beauty of the rest of the woods.

The one color lacking was blue. The sky's leaden gray was but a foil for the rich woodland tints, and I wandered on seeking its hue elsewhere. Over on the hillside are the hepaticas. Their color when open is hardly blue, being more

often purple or even lavender, yet they would do, lacking a more pronounced shade. But I could not find a hepatica in bloom as yet. Their tri-lobed leaves are still green and show but little the wear and tear of the winter's frosts and thaws. In the center of each group is the pointed bud that encloses the furry blossoms, itself as softly clad in protecting fur as the body of my moth visitor, but no hint of color peeped from it as yet. You need to look carefully in very early spring to be sure of this, too; for the hepatica is the shyest of sweet young things, and when she first blooms it is with such modesty that you have to chuck the flower-heads under the chin to get a glimpse even of their eyes. Later on the coaxing sun reassures them and they stare placidly and innocently up to it like wondering children.

Over on the sandy southern slope there might be violets, too. Later in the year the whole field will be blue with them and all about are their rosettes of sagittate leaves, which the cold has had to hold sternly in check to keep them from growing the winter through. Indeed, I do not believe it has fully succeeded. It has been a mild season, and I think the violets have taken the opportunity during warm spells of several days' duration to surreptitiously put forth another leaf or so in the very center of that rosette. If so, they might well have followed this courage with the further audacity of buds, and buds, indeed, they had but not one of them was open far enough to show even a faint hint of the blue that I was seeking.

It was hardly to be expected of the violets. They are so sturdy and full of simple, homely, common sense that it is

rare that you find them doing things out of the usual routine. Warm skies and south winds may tease them long before they will respond by blooming earlier than their wonted date. They know the ways of the world well and realize how unwise it is for proper young people to overstep the bounds of strict conventionality. On the other hand, the hepaticas, with all their innocence, perhaps because of it, care little for the conventions. Indeed, I doubt if they know there are such things, or if they have heard of them would recognize them. It is likely that in some sunny, sheltered nook some rash youngster, all clad in furs of pearl gray, is in bloom now, though so shy and so hidden that I was unable to find the hint of color. I have known them to half-open those lavender-blue eyes under the protecting crust of winter snow.

Toward nightfall the rain ceased and the clouds simply faded out of a pale sky, letting the sun shine through with gentle warmth. Whither the mists went it was hard to tell, but they were gone, and a soft spring sun began wiping the tears from all things. Under its caress it seemed as if you could see the buds swell a little, and I am quite sure, though I was not there to see, that at this moment the willow catkins down by the brook slipped forth from their protecting brown sheaths and boldly proclaimed the spring.

They might have done so, and I would not have seen had I been there, for just then I had a message. "Cheerily we, cheerily we," came a faint voice out of the sky. An echo from distant angel choirs practicing carols for Easter could not have seemed more musical or brought more delight to me down at the bottom

of the soft blue haze that was taking golden radiance from the setting sun. Up through it I looked to the pale blue of the sky and saw two motes dancing down the sunshine, — motes that caroled and grew to glints of heavenly blue that fluttered down on an ancient apple tree like bits of benediction.

Just a pair of bluebirds, of course, and I don't know now whether they are the first of the migrants to reach my part of the pasture or whether they are the two that have wintered here and that I have seen before on bright days. Wherever they came from they supplied the one bit of blue that I had sought, and their presence was like an embodiment of joy. Then the gentle prattling sweetness of their carol; what a range there was between that and the wild voice of the great-horned owl, heard not twenty-four

hours before! It was all the vast range between Arctic winter night and soft summer sunshine. The owl had voiced the savage grumble of the winter, the bluebird caroled the gentle promise of the spring.

The promise may be long in finding its fulfilment, of course. The snow may lie deep and the frost nip the willow catkins, — though little they 'll care for that, — and the bluebirds may be driven more than once to the deep shelter of the cedar swamp, but that does not take away the promise that came on the wings of the south wind, — the promise that set the great horned owl to laying her eggs in that abandoned crow's nest, and that made the bluebirds seek the ancient apple tree as their very first perch. March is no spring month, in spite of the "Old Farmer's Almanack." It is just a blank

page between the winter and the spring, but if you scan it closely you will find on it written the promise we all seek, — the hope that lured my great *Samia cecropia* out of his snug cocoon.

SPRING DAWN

SPRING DAWN

I HAVE been night-clerking a bit lately — social settlement work, you know — at the Pasture Pines Hotel, paying especial attention to the crow lodgers, and in so doing have come to the conclusion that in the last score or so of years the crows in my town have changed their habits.

It used to be their custom to roost in flocks, winters. Over on the Wheeler place in the big pines you could find a rookery of several hundred of a winter evening, dropping in from all directions and making a perfect uproar of crow talk, or rather crow yells, till darkness sent them all to sleep, sitting together in long rows on the upper limbs, I suppose for

mutual warmth. Here, each with head poked deep under his wing, they would remain till dawn, when with more uproar they would all whirl off together to some common breakfasting place. Later in the day they would become separated, only to drop in at night to the usual roost.

It was not a very safe proceeding, for farm boys, eager to use that new gun, used to go down before sunset and hide beneath the pines, letting go both barrels with great slaughter after the crows had become settled. Perhaps this had something to do with the breaking up of the custom, for now, though many crows roost on the Wheeler place, they do so singly, each in his own room, so to speak.

The same is true of the crow guests at the Pasture Pines Hotel. I had the

pleasure of waking them early there this morning, incidentally, and vicariously, waking all crow-town. Last night, just as the last tint of amber was fading from the sunset sky, letting a yellow-green evening star come through, almost like a first daffodil, a crow slipped bat-wise across the amber and dropped into a certain pine to roost.

I noted the tree, and this morning, before hardly a glimmer of dawn had come, slipped along beneath the dark boughs, planning to get just beneath his tree and see him first. But I had planned without the obstructions in the path and the uncertain light. I approached unheard on the needle-carpeted avenue beneath the big trees, but when I started across the field, still twenty rods away from my bird, I kicked a dry, broken branch.

"What? What's that?" It was an unmistakable crow inquiry, fairly shouted from the tree I had marked as the roosting place. There was n't the space of a breath between the snap of that branch and the answer of the bird. Surely a night-clerk in crow-town has an easy task. There need be no prolonged hammering on the door of the guest who would be called early. One tap is sufficient. I had hoped to stand beneath that tree and sight my crow in the gray of dawn, see him yawn with that prodigious black beak after he had withdrawn it from under his wing, then stretch one wing and one leg, as birds do, look the world over, catch sight of me and go off at a great pace, shouting a hasty warning to the world in general.

But he did not need to see me. That breaking branch had opened his eyes and

ears with one snap. He heard the crisp of my footfall on the frozen grass of the field and immediately there was a great flapping in the marked pine tree and he was off over the tops of its neighbors to a safe place an eighth of a mile away. He said three things, and so plain were they that any listener could have understood them. Languages vary, but emotions and the inflections they cause are the same in all creatures. The veriest tyro in wood-lore could have understood that crow.

His first ejaculation was plainly surprise and query blended. In his sleep he had heard a noise. He thought it, very likely, a fellow calling to him to get up and start the day's work. Then when the answer was a man's footfall he flew to safety, sounding the short, nervous yelp which is always the danger signal. Then

when he had again alighted in safety he realized that it was morning again and he was awake and it was time that the gang got together. "Hi-i, hi-i, hi-i-i," it said. It was neither musical nor polite, but it was intended to wake every crow within a half-mile in a spirit of riotous good-fellowship. There was no further need of my services; every crow within a half-mile answered that call. Then I could hear those farther on rousing and taking up the cry, and so it went on, no doubt indefinitely.

I have a feeling that I waked every crow in eastern Massachusetts a full half-hour before his accustomed time, simply by kicking that dead limb. However, I learned one thing, and hereby report it to the Lodging-House Commission: that is, that the crows hereabouts have now given up the dormitory idea and occupy

individual rooms after nightfall. They were scattered all through the pasture and woodland but no two were within twenty rods of one another.

Their minds have not yet turned to nest-building and mating, though the time is near, for they still flock in hilarious good-fellowship at sunrise, and you may hear them whooping and hurrahing about in crowds all day long. They may be beginning to "take notice"; I suspect some of the hilarity is over that. But they have not come to the pairing-off stage. When they reach that the flocks will disappear and you would hardly think there was a crow left in the whole wood. You might by stepping softly surprise a pair of them inspecting a likely pine in the pasture, planning for the nest. You might, by listening in secluded places, hear the curious, low-toned, prolonged

croak, which is a love-song. I have heard this described as musical, but it is not. It is as if a barn-door hinge should try to sing "O Promise Me." But there will be no more congregations.

Certainly there was not much in the aspect of the night which was just slipping away when I waked my crow that would seem to justify plans of nest-building. The thermometer marked twenty in my sheltered front porch when I stepped out. It must have been some degrees below that in the open. The ground was flint with the frost in it. The old thick ice was gone from the pond, indeed, broken up by the disintegrating insinuation of the sun and the vigorous lashing of northwest gales, but in its place was a skim of new ice formed that night. Standing still, you felt the lance of the north wind still; it was winter. Yet

you had but to breathe deep to get the soft assurance of the near presence of spring, and if you walked briskly for a moment the north wind's lances fell clattering to the icy ground and you moved in a new atmosphere of warmth and geniality. Thus point to point are the picket lines of the contending forces.

In the west the pale, cold moon, now a few days past the full, was sinking in a blue-black sky that might have been that of the keenest night in December. In the east, out of a low bank of dark clouds that marked the dun spring mists rising from the sea twenty miles away, flashed iris tints of dawn upward into a clear, pale sky that bore dapplings of softest apple-green. On the one hand were night and the winter, on the other dawn and the spring, and down the pine-sheltered path I walked between the two to a point

where I stopped in delight. The pine path ended, and the willows let the spring dawn filter through their delicate sprays. Just here I caught the hum of the water rolling over the dam and the prattle of the brook below, and right through it all, clear, mellow, and elated, came the voice of a song sparrow.

"Kolink, kolink, chee chee chee chee chee, tseep seedle, sweet, sweet," he sang and it fitted so well with the rollicking tinkle of the brook that I knew he was down among the alders where he could smell the rich spring odor of the purling water. The two sounds not only complemented one another as do two parts in music, but they were of the same quality, though so distinctly different. It was as if tenor and alto were being sung.

I had gone forth expecting bluebirds;

I had half hoped for a robin when it came time for matins, for robins have been about all winter, and here a song sparrow, no doubt the first spray from the northward surging wave of migratory birds, was the first to break the winter stillness. He had hardly piped his first round, though, before the voices of bluebirds murmured in the air above, and two lighted on the willows, caroling in that subdued manner which is the epitome of gentleness. I think these two were migrants, for later in the morning I heard others.

Then in a half minute there was a shrilling of wings that beat the air rapidly and six ducks swung over my head in the rosy dusk. Most ducks make a swishing sound with the wings when in rapid flight, but this was so marked a sibillation that I am quite sure it was a flock of

goldeneyes, more commonly called whistlers, because they so excel in wing music. They swung a wide circle over my head and then dropped back into the pond, where an opening in the young ice gave them opportunity. Curiosity probably brought them up. They wanted to see what that was prowling on the pond shore in the uncertain light, — a prompting that might have cost them dear had I carried a gun, for they came within easy range; then, having seen, they went back to their fishing. Their presence added a touch of wildness to the scene that was not without its charm, for you can hardly call the bluebird or the song sparrow wild birds. They are almost as domestic as the garden shrubbery.

For the moment the bird songs and the whistling of the ducks' wings through the rosy morning light made me forget the

grip of the winter cold that was in all the air, yet when I had crossed the dam and begun to clamber along the other shore of the pond the winter reasserted itself. Here was no promise of changing season. The thick ice in its disintegration had been pushed far ashore by the westerly gales, and here it was frozen in pressure ridges which were not so far different from those one may see on the Arctic shores. To them was cemented the young ice of the night, and I could walk along shore in places on its surface, its structure as elastic as that of early December.

Here, too, was piled high the débris not only of that great battle in which the spring forces had ripped the thick ice from the water, but of the daily skirmishes in which winter and north wind have set a half-inch of ice all along the surface and spring sunshine has broken

it away from its moorings, obliging the very north wind that made it to pile it in long windrows high on shore. To clamber along these pressure ridges and hear the crunching cakes resound under my tread in hollow, frosty tones, to feel the bite of the north wind which drifted across the new ice, was to step out of the spring promise which the birds had given me, back into the Arctic. I was almost ready to look for seal and wonder if I would n't soon hear the wild wolf-howl of Eskimo dogs and round a point onto one of their snow-igloo villages.

The song sparrow was far out of hearing and here we were in mid-winter again. Only in the east was there promise. Through the dark tracery of pond-bordering trees I could see the sky all a soft, unearthly green, like an impressionist lawn, and all through this the sun, now

close below the horizon, had forced into bloom red tulips and blue and yellow crocuses of spring dawn. From the ice ridges it was all as unreal as if it were hung in a frozen gallery, and I were an unwilling tourist shivering as I observed it.

Again, I had to go but a short distance to find a new country. Here the warmer waters of a little brook came babbling down the slope and had pushed away all the ice ridges and warmed its own path far out into the new ice. Along its edge the alder catkins hung in grouped tassels of venetian red, and here and there a group had so thrilled to the warmth of the running water that even in the face of the cold wind they had begun to relax a bit and show cracks in the varnished surface that has kept the stamens secure all winter.

It will not be long now before these favored ones will begin to shake the yellow pollen from their curls. Already they are giving the hint of it. A little way upstream, however, was a far more potent reminder of the coming season. I caught a whiff of its fragrance and smiled before I saw it.

I wonder why we always smile at this most beautiful spring flower, — for it was a spring blossom, the very first of the season, which was growing in the soft green of the brookside grass, its yellow head all swathed in a maroon and green, striped and flecked, pointed hood, lifted bravely above the protecting herbage into the nipping air. The flowering spadix I could not see; only the handsome, protecting spathe which was wound about the tender blooms to protect them from the cold. When the sun is high in the sky

this spathe will loosen a bit and let visiting insects enter for the fertilization of the blossom. But in that cold air of early morning it was wrapped tight.

I have seen orchids tenderly nurtured in conservatories that had not half the honest beauty of this flower. Neither to me is the odor of the derided skunk-cabbage more unpleasant than that of many a coddled and admired garden bloom — a dahlia, for instance. Yet I smiled in derision on catching the first whiff of it, and so do we all. If the *symplocarpus* cared it would be too bad, but it does not. Unconscious of its caddish critics, it blooms serenely on in the swamps and takes the tiny insects into its confidence and its hood, and adds a bit of rich color to the place when no other blossom dares. And even as I looked at it the sun slipped out of the low band of dark horizon-

mists and sent a golden good-morning like a benediction right down upon the head of the humble, courageous, sturdy beauty of the brookside. After that approval why should any blossom care?

MARCH WINDS

MARCH WINDS

FOR two days the mad March winds have been blowing a fifty-mile gale, setting all the woodland crazy. No wonder the March hare is mad. He lives in Bedlam. No sooner does he squat comfortably in his form, his fair fat belly with round apple-tree bark lined, topped off with wee green sprigs of rash but succulent spring herbs from the brookside, ready to contemplate nature with all the philosophy which such a condition engenders, than the form rises in the air and its component leaves skitter through the wood and over the hill out of sight, leaving him denuded.

The usually dignified and gentle trees howl like beagles on his trail. The pro-

tecting scrub oaks, gone mad, too, dab and flip at him till he gets fidgety with thoughts of horned owls, and things rattle down out of the sky as if he were being pelted with buckshot. All these matters get on his nerves after a little, and if he sets his cotton-tail white flag at half mast from fear and goes whooping through the brush in a frenzy, there is small blame to him. Even man, whose mental girth and weight are supposed to be ballast sufficient against all buffetings, going forth on such a day needs the buttons of his composure well sewed on or he will find it ripped from him like the hare's form and sent skittering down the lea along with his hat, while he himself bolts here and there fighting phantoms and objurgating the unseen.

Mad March winds are a good test of stability of soul. He who can stand their weltings with serenity, can watch his un-

anchored personal belongings go mad with the March hare and still thrid the sombre boskage of the wood with sunny thought and no venom beneath his tongue, ought to be President. Even the New York papers could not make him bring suit.

And after the two days of gale how sweet the serenity that came to the thrashed and winnowed pastures and woodland. I fancy it all feeling like a boy at school who, after being soundly flogged, gets back to the soothing calm of his accustomed seat. There is a gentle joy about that feeling that, as many of us know, has neither alloy nor equal. The whole woodland, thus spanked and put away to cool, feels the winter of its discontent vanishing behind it and has no room in its heart for aught but the peace and joy of regeneration.

The gale began to fail during the second

day and before midnight it was dead; thus short-lived is frenzy. I do not know now if those last gentle sighs were those of the wind in sorrow of its misdeeds, thus on its death-bed repentant, or those of the trees, themselves given a chance to sleep at last after a forty-hour fight for their lives. In the threshing and winnowing of the woodland none but the physically fit may survive. Oaks that have held their last year's leaves lovingly on the twig had to let them go like the veriest chaff, and all twigs and limbs that have been weakened.

And as chaff and débris is thus pruned from the forest, so those trees themselves that are not physically fit for the struggle for existence are weeded out. The eye may not be able to pick these, but the gale finds them. If the whelming pressure of its steady onrush is not sufficient to bring

them down, the racking of varying force and the torsion of sudden changes in direction will snap the weakened trunk or tear out the loosened roots. Then there is a groan and a crash, and space for the younger growth to spread toward more light and air.

At no time of year is the weakness of roothold so liable to be fatal to a tree as now. During the winter a gale may snap a tree off at the trunk and smash it bodily to the ground. But if there is no weakness in the trunk there can be none in the roots, for the frost that is set about them holds even the shortest, as if embedded in stone. But now, when the solvent ice has loosened the whole surface for a depth of a foot or more, leaving it fluffy and disintegrated, those trees which have no tap-roots and hold only in this lightened surface are in the greatest

danger of uprooting of the whole year. Farmers often clear a shrubby pasture in late March or early April hereabout by taking advantage of this fact. They make a trace-chain fast about the base of a pasture cedar or a stout huckleberry bush, and with a word to the old horse the shrub is dragged from the softened earth, root and all. In mid-summer, after the ground has become compact, this is not to be done.

It is the spring house-cleaning time of the year, when nature is sweeping and picking up, preparatory to laying new carpets and getting new furnishings throughout, and if any of the old furniture of the woodland is not able to stand the strain it has to go to the woodpile. Without the mad March winds the forest would lose much of its fresh virility, the old deadwood would cumber the new growth,

and the mild melancholy of decay would prevail as it does in some swamps where sheltering surrounding hills and close growth shunt the gales.

Yet, though house-cleanings are no doubt necessary and beneficient, few of us love them, and we hail with equal joy the resultant cleanliness and the cessation of the uproar. The two days' gale finally got all the winds of the world piled up somewhere to the southward and ceased, and the piled-up atmosphere drifted back over us, bringing mild blue haze that was like smoke from the fires of summer floating far. All things that had been taut and dense relaxed into dimples or softened into tears. The frost went out of the plowed fields that morning, though the sun was too blurred with the kindly blue mist to have any force. It was just the general relaxation which did it.

Then is apt to come a halcyon day, and though the kingfisher is not here to brood, nor will he be for a month, his fabled weather slips on in advance to cheer us. It may not last a day. March is as mad as April is fickle, and you will need to start early to be sure of it. Then, even if you come home in a snow-storm, you will at least have had a brief glimpse of that sunny softness which is dearer in March than in any other month.

This morning, in that calm which is most apt to settle on the land just before sunrise, the whole woodland seemed to breathe freely and beam in the soft air. The bluebirds caroled all about, and where a few days ago one song sparrow surprised me with his song, a dozen jubilated in the pasture bushes. A half-dozen blackbirds flew over, and though I could

not see a single red epaulet in the gray light, and listened in vain for that melodious "kong-quer-ree" which no other bird can sing, I knew them as well by their call of "chut-chuck," which is equally characteristic.

A flock of goldfinches lighted in the pines with much twittering and suggestions of the summer flight-note of "per-chicoree." But that is no more than they have been doing all winter. In a moment, though, the twittering changed. A melodious note began to come into it, and soon several in the flock were singing rival songs as sweet, though I do not think as loud, as those they will sing when June warmth sets the whole bird world a-choiring. It was a happy note in the cool spring air, for it was more than a spring song. The bluebirds and song sparrows voice that, but the song of the goldfinch is a

song of summer, and irresistibly reminds one of fervid June heat and full-leaved trees. It was a warming, winning chorus, and it brought the sun up over the horizon, seemingly with a bound.

In all this joy of early matins I still miss one bird note that surely ought to be heard by now, and that is the robin's. Robins are here in considerable numbers, but not one of them have I heard sing. I 'm afraid the robin is lazy, but, perhaps, it is just his honest, matter-of-fact nature which does not believe in forcing the season. He will sing loud and long enough by-and-by.

Such a spring morning is the best season of the year for moth hunting. The moths are all sound asleep still, tucked away in their cocoons, that are also tucked away in the woodland where it is not so easy to see them in winter. Now

the mad March winds have swept the last brown leaves from the bushes, and such moths as hang up there for the winter sleep are easily seen. You may take them home and hang them up wherever you see fit, and you will then be on hand to greet the moth when at his leisure he feels prompted to come forth from his snug sleeping-bag.

I always find more of the spice-bush silk-moth than any others, — perhaps because we both love the same woodland spots, borders of the ponds and streams where the benzoin and sassafras flourish, or upland pastures where the wild cherry hangs out its white racemes in May. They dangle freely in the wind, looking for all the world like a left-over leaf rolled by accident into a rude cylinder. Yet the moth is safe and warm within, rolled up in a silken coat that is firmly

glued to the leaf; and not only that, but extends in silky fabric all up along the petiole, and firmly holds it to the twig itself. The mad winds which have scoured the bush clean of all leaves and débris have had no strength which can pluck this "last leaf upon the tree."

If left to itself it will still hang there a year or two, perhaps more, after the moth has emerged, gradually bleaching to a soft gray, but still clinging. It is a splendid quality of silk, but no one has yet succeeded in reeling or carding it. *Callosamia promethia* thus escapes becoming a product of the farm rather than the pasture. It is a fine species to have hanging in winter cradles above your mantel, for the *imago* is large and beautiful, with deep browns and tans softly shading into grays that are tinted with iris, the male being distinct with a body

color of deep brown less diversified than the coloring of his mate.

The *Samia cecropia* is another of our silk-worm moths whose cocoon is not difficult to find. The *cecropia*, instead of rolling up in a pendant leaf, constructs his cocoon without protection, and glues it right side up beneath a stout twig or even a considerable limb. I have one now that I took from the under side of a big leaning alder bole, skiving it off with the bark, but most of those I have collected have been attached to slender twigs of low shrubs.

But, though the *cecropia* does not roll up in a leaf, he is apt to place his winter home where dead leaves will persist about him. I have never found him so plentiful as the *promethea*, though he is commonly reported as numerous. Perhaps this habit of hiding among the dead leaves

has to do with this. He is our largest moth, and in beauty of coloring is surpassed, to my mind, only by two others.

One of these is *Telia polyphemus*, — a wonderful creature, almost as large as the *cecropia*, all a soft, rosy tan with fleckings of gray and white and bands of soft violet-gray and pink, and great eye-spots of white margined with yellow, browed with peacock blue, and ringed with violet-black. The larva, which is bigger than a big man's thumb, is a beautiful shade of transparent green with side slashings of silvery white, and feeds on most of our deciduous forest trees.

I have had most luck in finding them on chestnuts. Last fall, when beating a chestnut tree for the nuts, I dislodged several, one of which I brought home and put in a cage with some leaves. He refused to eat, but in a day or so spun a

cocoon down in the corner of the box with a chestnut leaf glued over him. No wonder we rarely see either moth, caterpillar, or cocoon. The larva dwells in the higher trees, rolls himself in leaves in the autumn, and spends the winter on the ground, usually covered out of sight by the other leaves. Then the moth, wary and swift, flies only by night.

The *Actias luna*, the beautiful, long-tailed, green luna moth, is, I think, better known, for it has a way of flitting about woodland glades in late June or July, before nightfall. But in the caterpillar or the cocoon it is as hard to find as the *polyphemus*, and for similar reasons. It, too, feeds upon walnut and hickory, and in the fall spins a papery cocoon among the dried leaves on the ground.

The *luna* moth is to me the highest type of moth beauty, and it is worth a

long search among leaves to find a cocoon of either this or the *polyphemus*, and have the splendid privilege of seeing the lovely inmate later emerge, spread its fairy-like wings, and soar away into the soft spring twilight. It is as great a wonder as it would be to step some mid-summer midnight into a fairy ring and, after having speech with Mab and Titania and Puck and Ariel, see them flit daintily across the face of the rising moon and vanish in the purple dusk. The world of the *polyphemus* and the *luna*, the *cecropia* and the *promethea*, is as far removed from ours and as full of strange romance as that.

Along the pond shore these mad March days one gets glimpses of another world, too, that is, I dare say, as regardless of us as we are of that of the moths. This morning in the dusk of young dawn the pond was like a black mirror reflecting

the shadows of the sky. But across it, near the middle, was drawn a silver streak, the path of ducks swimming. Presently I heard their voices, — the resonant quack of a black duck and the hoarse "pra-a-p pr-a-a-p" of the drake. As they called, into the pond with a splash came a small flock of divers, showing white as they whirled to settle. The two species swam together, seemed to look each other over, held who knows what conversations in their own way, then separated. It is not for black duck and buffleheads to congregate, especially in the spring; and while the black duck and drake swam sedately away, the buffleheads began to hunt the small white perch which swim in schools near the surface, making a splash as if a stone was thrown into the water at every lightning-like dive.

Just as many a man here in Massachusetts lives his life and dies without ever having seen or heard of a *polyphemus* moth or a bufflehead, though both may fly over his own head on many a dusky twilight, so the migrating thousands of ducks each year fly over our cities and know little of their uproar and bustle, nothing of their yearnings toward art or theology, or of the inspiration of poets or the agony of the down-trodden. Their world is all-important to them; ours is nothing, so they escape our guns, which they vaguely feel will harm them.

Even we with our books, our laboratories, and our concerted research into all things under heaven and in earth, do not get very far into the lives of other creatures. I have said all the moths are still in their cocoons. Perhaps they are, all but one, at least. That is a small

brown fellow that came flying across the brook in the chill air of a sunset a night or two ago and now lies dead on my desk.

I caught him, for I wanted to know what moth dared come forth when the ground was still frozen and no bud had yet burst. But I would better have let him fly along to work out his own destiny, for in all the moth-book there is no mention of this wee brown creature that dared the frosty night with frail wings. I do not think he was an uncommon specimen. Moths are so numerous that only the most characteristic varieties of the more important species can be noticed in the text-books.

On my way home I crossed a sunny glade among the pines, and here I met an old friend, and had another example of the workings of other lives whose wis-

dom or ability is beyond our ken. On the dark trunk of a pine was sitting the spring's first specimen, so far as my observation goes, of butterfly life, an *Antiopa vanessa,* his mourning cloak so closely folded that it made him invisible against the pine-tree bark. As I drew near he flipped into the air and sailed by, beautiful in his tan-yellow border with its spots of soft blue.

I say he was on the pine bark, but I did not see him there. For aught I know, so well was he concealed, the tree opened and let him out, then closed, that his hiding place might not be revealed. I would almost as soon believe this as to believe, what lepidopterists assure me is true, that this frail creature lives through the zero gales and deep snows of five months of winter to come out in the first bright days of early spring unharmed. It

is as likely that a pine trunk would voluntarily conceal him as that he could survive, frozen solid in some crevice in a stone wall or hollow stump. At any rate, he is out again, along with the hepaticas and song sparrows, and though the March winds and the March hare may both go mad again, we have had moments when the spring was very near.

WOOD ROADS

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SOME time in the night the tender gray spring mists that the hot afternoon sun had coaxed up from all the meadowy places realized that they were deserted, lost in the darkness. The young moon had gone decorously to bed at nine o'clock, pulling certain cloud puffs of white down over even the tip of her nose, that she might not be tempted to come out and dance with these lovely pale creatures.

They were dancing then, but later they trembled together in fright, for the kindly stars, their shining eyes grown tremulous with tender tears, vanished too, withdrawn behind the black haze which the north wind sends before it. A nimbus, wind-blown from distant mountain tops,

was spreading over the zenith, and through it the gentle spring mists heard resound the crack of doom, the voice of the north wind itself, made up of echoes of crashing ice floes out of Hudson's Bay and the Arctic. Then the spring mists fled to earth again, but had no strength left to enter in. Instead, they lay there dead, covering all things a half-inch deep with soft bodies of purest white, and we looked forth in the morning and said that there had been a robin-snow.

It is a pity that those gentle, innocent gray-blue spring mists should die, even to be lovely in death as they are, but it is their way of getting back home. In the morning the repentant sun came and dissolved the white, silent ones into gentle tears, — dayborn dew that slipped down among the grass roots and laid moist cheeks close to daisy and violet buds as

they went by, and almost loved them into bloom. A few more robin-snows and they will all be out. Very likely somewhere a dandelion, some sturdy, rough-and-ready youngster, quivered into yellow florescence at the caress. Robin-snows and the cajoling sun of the last week of March often make summer enough for this honest, fearless flower.

Quite likely the tender joy of the mists at getting back safe to earth under the caress of the eager sun, and their terror of the north wind, which still rumbles by in the upper air, are both nascent on such days, for you have but to go out to feel them, and they inevitably lead you out of the raw mire of the highways, across the wind-swept pasture, into wood roads.

These on such days have an atmosphere of their own. Here the thrill of the sun is as potent as the push of the X-ray. It

slips through clothes and flesh, nor do bones stay it till it tingles in the marrow, a vitalizing fire that is soothed and nourished by the soft essence of those dead mists, now glowing upward from the moist humus. No wonder the woodland things come to life and grow again at the touch! The north wind may howl high above. Here under the trees the soft airs that breathe out of Eden touch you and you know that just round the curve of the road is the very gate itself.

My way to the most secret and withdrawn country of these wood roads always leads me across Ponkapog brook at the spot where rest the ruins of the old mill. It is three-quarters of a century or more since it ground grist, and of its timbers scarcely a moss-grown remnant remains. The gate to the old dam has been gone almost as long, but the waters

do not forget. Every year the spring floods bring down what driftwood the pond banks can spare and bar their own course with it at this spot. The water rises as high as of old, for a brief time.

It is as if the brook paid a memorial tribute thus yearly to the honest labor of the pioneers, now long gone. For a time it lasts, then the cementing bonds of dead leaves fail and the black flood roars through to the sea. Come two months later and where its highest rim touched you will find that it planted flowers in loving remembrance also, and saxifrage and dwarf blue violet lean in fragrant affection over the waters. I like to think that on Memorial day at least the stream makes echo of the clank of the old-time mill-wheel in its liquid prattle, and that the shuttle of reflected sunshine dancing back and forth is a glorified ghost of the

old wheels whirling once more in memory of the miller and his neighbors.

Farther on I reach the pond shore, and on the narrow ridge which marks the old-time high tide of winter ice pressure, a dry moraine always, though running through marshy land, I strike what must be the oldest trail in this part of the country. Here is a path which was traveled before the time of the Norman conquest, or, for that matter, before Cæsar led his victorious legions into Gaul. Here the first Indians trod dry-footed when they went back and forth about the pond in their hunting and fishing, for then, as now, it was a natural causeway.

To-day a stranger, seeking his way about the pond for the first time, would not fail to find it, and the habitual wood-rover of the region, old or young, knows its every turn. Upon this to-day, between

the marsh and the bog in the alluring spring sunshine, I found a whole bird convention. Such an uproar! It was as if the suffragettes in one grand concerted movement had swooped down upon Parliament by the air-ship route, as the cable says they threaten, and were in the heat of battering down its walls of deafness with racket and roaring, after the fashion of the attempt on Jericho of old.

The blackbirds were in the greatest numbers and made the most noise individually. There were a hundred of them, more or less, sitting about in the trees and bushes, a few on the ground, and all of them practicing every call or song that blackbird was ever known to make. All the harsh croaking of frogs that as young birds they heard from the nest by the bog they voiced in their calls; all the liquid

melody of gentle brooks tinkling over shallows, and the piping of winds in hollow marsh reeds, they reproduced in their songs, and the whole was jumbled in this uproarious medley. They even shamed a robin or two into singing, — the first time I have heard these laggards do it this year, though they have been here in force for some weeks.

There seemed to be no cause for this other than the joy of living. It was just an impromptu concert in honor of the spring. I think I never noticed before how vigorously the blackbird uses his tail at one of these concerts. All the long black tails present worked up and down as if each were a pump-handle working a bellows to supply wind for the pipings. It reminded me of the church organ-loft, and the labors of the boy when the choir is in full swing and the organ-

ist has everything opened up and is dancing on the pedal notes to keep up.

Either side of this trail the wood should be a paradise for woodpeckers, for the trees are here allowed to grow old without interference. In birch and maple stubs the flickers have dug hole after hole, sometimes all up and down a single trunk. The downy woodpeckers have been active also and the chickadees have reared many a nestful of fluffy chicks in the same neighborhood. Yet, with all the opportunity that the flickers have had to bore in soft decaying wood for food or for shelter, I see that they have also dug a round hole through the inch boards in the peak of the old cranberry house. This, too, was probably for shelter, for many flickers winter with us, and there would be room in the old cranberry house-loft for a whole community, but I won-

der sometimes if there is not another reason.

Just as beavers and squirrels must gnaw to keep their teeth from growing too long, so I sometimes think that woodpeckers need to hammer about so much, whether for food or not, to keep their bills in good condition. It is difficult to otherwise account for their continual practice. I knew a flicker once who used to drum a half-hour at a time on a sheet-iron ventilator on the roof of a building. I think he did it to keep his bill properly calloused and his muscle up, so that when he did tackle a shagbark tree with a fat, inch-long borer waiting in its heart-wood the chips would fly.

This low pond-bank moraine with its immemorial trail leads all along the north side of the pond, skirting the shoreward edge of the great bog nicely. It takes

you through the Talbot plains where tan-brown levels stretch far to the northward, seeming to shrink suddenly back from the overhanging bulk of Great Blue Hill, and it leads again into the tall oak woods, where later the warbling vireos will swing in the topmost branches and cheer the solemn arches with their gentle carols. By-and-by the bog ends and the path marks the dividing line between the bulrushes, marsh grass, bog-hobble wickets, and mingled débris of last summer's thoroughwort, and joepye weed, and marsh St. John's-wort on the one hand, and the soft pinky grays of the wood on the other.

The climbing sun shines in here fervently, and the clear waters lap on the sand and croon among the water weeds with all the semblance of summer. No wonder the wild ducks linger long. The

pond is full of them, — black ducks and sheldrake, — quacking and whistling back and forth, sometimes forty of them in the air at once, and taking no notice of the wanderer on the bank. It seems to be their jubilee day as well as that of the birds on shore.

Thus by way of the long trail teeming with spring life I reach the enchanted country of the wood roads. Here are no pastures reclaimed, no ancient cellar holes to show the path of the pioneer. Woodland it was when the first Englishman came to Cape Cod; woodland it remains to-day. Somewhere in its depths the barred owls are nesting, and I hear the shrill pæan of a hawk as he harries the distant hillside. But for the most part there is a gentle silence, a dignified quiet that befits the solitude. It is the hush of the elder years dwelling in places

somewhat man-harried indeed, but never by man possessed. In this country to the east of Ponkapog Pond lingered longest the moose and bear. The fox makes it his home and his hunting-ground still; I find his trail still warm, and in summer you should tread with care, for an occasional rattlesnake trails his slow length among the rocks. The most that man has ever done here is to shoot and chop trees. The echoes of axe and gun die away soon, the trees grow up again, and man's only mark is the wood roads.

Roads in this world are supposed to lead from somewhere to somewhere else, but no suspicion of such definiteness of purpose can ever be attached to wood roads, unless you are willing to say that they lead from the land of humdrum to the country of romance. Sometimes, in following them, you unexpectedly come

out on the highway, but far more often you have better luck, and the plain trail grows gently vague, shimmers away to nothing, and you find yourself, perhaps, in a beech grove, out of which is no path. You can hear the young trees titter at your embarrassment, but you cannot find the path that led you among them.

Perhaps in all your future wanderings you may not come upon that beech grove again, for the wood roads wind and interlace and play strange tricks on all outsiders. Particularly over in this region wood-lot owners sometimes lose their wood-lots, and are able to get track of them only after prolonged search, tumbling upon them then more by accident than wit. Sometimes a wood road innocently leads you round a hill and slyly slips you into itself again through a gap

in the thicket. Thus, before you know it, you may have gone around the hill any number of times, as strangers get coursing in revolving doors in the entrances to city buildings and continue to revolve until rescued.

Nor can you tell where the most sedate and straightforward one which you can pick out will lead you, except that you know it will be continually through a land of delight, and that Eden is bound to be just ahead of you.

It is difficult to understand, though, in all seriousness, how these roads persist. Wood cut off over extensive areas grows up again in thirty or forty years and fills in the gap in the forest till no trace of it remains, yet the roads by which it was carted to the highway, leading once as directly as possible, seem still to have some subtle power of resistance whereby

they are not overgrown, though they lose their directness. After a few years it seems as if, glad to be relieved of any responsibility, they took to strolling aimlessly about, meeting one another and separating again casually.

I never see a wood-cart coming out with a load, yet the road seems as definite in marking as it did a half-century ago. But that is one of the fascinations of the region. You take the same road as usual, and by it you come out at some strange and hitherto unheard-of garden of delight. It is like the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, where one story leads into another and you wander on with always a new climax just ahead of you.

Out of the great pudding-stone boulders of this region, of which you may find specimens as large as an ordinary dwelling-house standing in lonely dignity, you

may see cunning workmen making soil for the nourishment of these forest trees. Here will be a round blot of yellow-gray lichen, perhaps a *Parmelia conspérsa,* clinging to the smoothest surface of flint with ease and sending down its microscopic rhizoids into the tiniest crevice between the round pebble, which is the plum, and the slate which makes the body of the pudding.

On another part of the boulder you may find a slanting surface, where the *parmelia's* work is already done. Its tiny root-organs have dissolved off and split away enough of the slate to loosen some tiny pebbles, which fall to the ground as gravel, leaving hollows in which dew and dead lichens make a soil for the roots of soft pads of mosses. Some of the boulders over here are like Western buttes, densely tenanted by these hardy

cliff-dwellers, the many-footed rock lovers finding foothold where you would hardly think the lichens even would survive.

I never tramp these roads, which it sometimes seems as if the pukwudgies moved about in the night for the confusion of men, without being lost, at least for a time, and finding a new boulder to worship. Once, thus lost, I found a little gem of a pond, which hides in the hollows a half-mile or so east from Ponkapog Pond. This, too, I fear the pukwudgies move about in the night, for I hear of many men who have found it once and sought it again in vain.

To-day I came upon it once more, — a cup of clear water in the hollow of the forest's hand, smiling up at the sky with neither inlet or outlet. The black ducks had found it, too. They greeted my approaching footsteps with quacks of alarm,

and I had hardly rounded the bushes on the bank before sixteen of them, with much splashing, rose heavily into the air and sailed off toward the big pond.

Even in their fright I noticed that they went out as the animals did from the ark, — two by two, — and I smiled, for it is one more sign of spring. I noticed the crows in couples to-day for the first time. A few black duck breed hereabout, and the little pond with the button-bushes growing along one shallow shore as thick as mangroves in a West India swamp might well be considered by house-hunting couples. Sitting under a mountain laurel whose leaves furnish the only shade on the bank, I watched quietly for nearly half an hour. Then there was a soft swish of sailing wings, and a pair dropped lightly in without splash enough to be heard. Yet there was little to see,

after all. They simply sat mirrored in the motionless water for another half-hour by the town clock, looking adoration into one another's eyes, then snuggled close and swam in among the button-bushes as if with one foot. That was all. It was a veritable quaker-meeting love-making; but just the same I shall look for the nest among the button-bush mangroves in another month, and I do hope that pukwudgies will not have mixed the wood roads and hidden the pond so well that I cannot find it.

THE BROOK IN APRIL

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THE pond is a mile long, but it is shallow, with a level bottom that was once a peat meadow, and the water, holding some of this peat in solution, has a fine amber tinge. It is as if the sphagnums that wrought for ages in the bog and died to give it its black levels held in reserve vast stores of their own rich wine reds and mingled them with the yellows of hemlock heart-wood and the soft tan of marsh grasses that lie dead, all robed in funereal black at the pond bottom.

By what mystery of alchemy the water compounds during its winter wait under the thick ice this amethystine glow in its

pellucid depths I do not know, but the spring sunlight always shows it as it sends its shafts down into the quivering shallows, and it creams the foam that fluffs beneath the gate of the old dam and flows seaward.

This gate is always lifted a little and the stream never fails. In spring its brimming volume floods the meadows and roars down miniature rocky gorges, — a soothing lullaby of a roar that you may hear crooning in at your window of an April night to surely sing you to sleep. In summer the gateman comes along and puts a mute on the stream by dropping the gate a little, and it lisps and purls through the little gorges, slipping from one rock-bound pool to another.

In April the suckers come up, breasting the flood from another pond a half-mile down stream, to spawn; great,

sturdy, lithe, shiny-sided fellows they are, at this time of year almost as beautiful and as alert as salmon, weighing sometimes five or six pounds. The same intoxication which makes the flood froth and dance and shout as it tumbles down the steeps from meadow to meadow seems to thrill in their veins and give them strength to cleave an arrow flight through the quivering rapids and gambol up the falls with an exultant agility that seems strange in this fish that is so sluggish and dull on the pond bottom in midsummer.

Adam's ale is brewed the year round, but it is the spring drought that works miracles of agility in the blood of somber creatures. Winter fishes are like some middle-class Englishmen sitting glum and motionless in their stalls. Only when tapster Spring draws the ale and the bar-

maid brooks dance blithely down with foaming mugs do we learn how jovial and athletic they may be. Thus the suckers, suddenly waking to exuberant activity, swim the frothing current, leap the miniature falls like gleaming salmon, and congregate just below the dam.

Some years the gateman has kindly instincts at just the psychological moment and comes over and shuts down the gate of a Saturday afternoon in the presence of many boys, in whose veins also froths the exultant foam of spring joy. Then, indeed, does low water spell Waterloo for the suckers. In the shoaling current they flee down stream, seeking the deeper pools and hiding under stones in water-worn hollows wherever they can find refuge.

There is a crude instrument, formerly a familiar output of the local blacksmith, known as a sucker spear. It is com-

posed of two cast-off horseshoes, one being straightened and welded across the other in the middle of the bend. This gives a rough imitation of Neptune's trident, with the three prongs a good half-inch broad and usually sharpened to a cutting edge. Mounted on a long pole it is complete, and its possession makes of a boy a vengeful Poseidon having dominion over the shallows of the brook. Boys who know no better because they have been taught by their elders that this is the way to do it, "spear" suckers with these instruments. A handy youngster can guillotine a five-pound fish into two separate, bloody sections with this plunging death, and fork the limp and quivering remnants up on the bank with it.

Even the boy who does it, though he whoops with the wild delight of bloody conquest, knows that this is not sport.

There is a better way to catch suckers, and he who has once learned it willingly discards the crude instrument of the blacksmith for the fine touch of the true sportsman. He matches boy against fish, and feels the man thrill through his marrow every time he wins. It is the same game that great John Ridd learned from his primitive forbears on the West of England's moors, whereby he went forth to tickle trout in the icy stream and was led into the enchanted valley where dwelt huge outlaws — and Lorna Doone.

Bare-legged and bare-armed you wade into the icy water and slip your hands gently under the big stones at bottom, wherever there are crevices into which a fish might enter. If you have the requisite fineness of touch, experience will soon tell you what it is you feel beneath in the darkness of the watery cave. It may be

nothing but the fine play of currents across your fingers, in which all sensitiveness and expectation seem to center. It is wonderful how much soul crowds down into your finger-tips when they feel for something you cannot see in places where things may bite.

There may be a turtle there, and if so you have leave to withdraw. It may be an eel, and you need not mind, for the eel will take care of himself; you can no more grasp him than you can the quivering currents. It is customary to expect water-snakes, and there is a fineness of delight about the dread that the expectation inspires that is just a little more than mortal. Orpheus, seeking dead Eurydice, must have turned the corners on the way down with some such feeling. Perhaps it is because the dread is groundless that it is so deific. It has no basis in the

senses, but is purely a creature of the finer imaginings. The water-snake is harmless if by any chance he could be there. But there is no chance of this. At the sucker time of the year he is still sleeping his winter sleep, tucked away in some rock crevice of the upper bank, safe from flood and frost.

If you prod crudely the big fish will take flight and rush to another hiding place. But if you are wise and careful enough you will feel something swaying in the current and stroking your fingers like the soft touch of a feather duster. It is the big fellow's tail and you will soon learn better than to grab it. The muscular strength of one of these big fish is beyond belief. Howsoever tight your grip on him here, he will swing his body from side to side with such force and swiftness that he will writhe from your

hold before you can get him out of water.

That is not the way to do it. Instead, you cunningly slip your hand gently along from his tail toward his head. You will likely go over your rolled-up sleeve; perhaps it will be necessary to plunge shoulder and even head in the effort to reach far enough.

Having discounted the Plutonian water-snakes you will find this but giving zest to the game; indeed, it is doubtful if you know that it has happened until it is all over. Your palm slides gingerly over the dorsal fin and goes on till you feel the gentle waving of the pectorals. Then suddenly you grip a thumb and finger into the gills, showing the iron hand through the velvet, and with one strong surge lift your fish from beneath his rock and fling him high upon the bank.

There is a fundamental joy in this kind of fishing that you can get in no other. If there were fish in the rivers of Paradise Adam caught them for Eve in this way. I have always been sorry that big John Ridd found nothing but fingerling trout on his way up the little stream that led to the Doone Valley. He should have tackled our brook in April.

Along the stream to-day, noting the pussy-willows all out in spring garments of pearl gray and the alders swaying and sifting yellow dust from their open stamens, I passed the spot where Bose and I met as early a spring run of fish as often occurs. Bose would corroborate it if he could, but, unfortunately, Bose is somewhat dead, as much so as a dog of his spirit and imagination can be. His bones lie decently buried down under the great oak where he loved to sit and think

about foxes, but I am not so sure about the rest of it. If there are any happy hunting-grounds where the souls of game flee away I warrant Bose leads the pack. He was a full-blooded foxhound, deep-chested, musical, lop-eared; and he did n't know a fox from a buff cochin. He hunted continually, but rarely on a real trail. His nose was for visions.

It was on a first day of April that we came out of the door together, and Bose took one sniff, lifted his head, bayed musically, and was off into the pasture with me following, both of us ripe for any adventure. There was a smell of spring in the air; indeed, I was not sure but it was the green-robed, violet-crowned goddess whom the dog set forth to hunt. If so, I was more than glad to follow, for the winters seem long in my town. We know that the sun-god is pursuing Daphne

northward. We have signs of her in the yearning of willow twigs and the shy blooming of hepaticas. If she should already be hiding in some sunny, sheltered nook of the pasture Bose would be as likely to go after her as any other vision.

March had gone out like a lamb, trailing a shorn fleece of mists behind him, — mists that morning sun tinted with opal fires that burned out after a little and left pale-blue ashes smeared in the hollows and blown soft against the distant hills. All through the air thrilled the glamor of those new-born hopes that attend the goddess, and I wanted to give tongue with Bose when I found him quartering the barberry slope of the upper pasture with clumsy gallop.

He had led me plump into fairy-land at the first plunge, for the brown leaves

of last year rustled with the tread of brownies, and I came up in time to see a fat gnome rolling along, humping his shoulders and jiggling with laughter before the uproarious onslaught of the dog, turning at the burrow's mouth to grin in the teeth of eager jaws and vanish into thin air as they clicked. A woodchuck? So Hodge would call it, seeing according to his kind. Probably Bose knew it for a fox, a silver-gray at least, according to his foxhound dreams. I myself knew that spring glamor was on all the woodland and that this was a round-paunched gnome, guardian of buried treasure, out for an April day frolic, and going back reluctantly to his post after having a moment's fun with the dog.

As for the brownies, they were signs, or rather forerunners, pacemakers to the

spring. I could see the little black eyes and droll-pointed noses of them as they worked eagerly all about in the shrubbery, passing the word that the goddess might arrive at any moment and that it was time to dress for her. Now they whispered it to terminal buds, and now to lateral, but mostly they put their brown heads down among the leaves, giving the message to bulb and corm, tuber and root stock. I could hear them calling all about, a quaint little elfin note of "tseep, tseep," and anon one would turn a roguish handspring and vanish, thus hocus-pocusing himself to the next northward grove.

Busy brownies they were, — hop-o'-my-thumbs clad in rufous-brown feather coats that so harmonized with the dead leaves among which they worked that it was difficult to see them except when they moved. Ornithologists, bound by the let-

ter of their knowledge, would, I dare say, name these fox sparrows; but even these might have hesitated and forgotten their literalness, looking into newborn April's smiling face that blue-misted morning, out trailing the spring with Bose.

Then, much like the brownies, Bose vanished. He seemed to have lost the trail, nor was my scent keener, though all about were signs. The maple twigs were decorated with rosettes of red and yellow in honor of her coming. Birch twigs reddened with them, and the woodland that had been gray was fairly blushing with tell-tale color. Over on an open, sandy hillside the cinquefoil buds were beginning to curl upward, and in the heart of violet leaves faint hints of blue made you think of sleepy children just opening a little of one eye at promise of morning.

Here, too, I was conscious of a faint, ethereally fine perfume that seemed to float suddenly to my senses as if it had come over the treetops from the south. From up stream came the babble of the brook like dainty laughter. If I had heard the swish of silken garments floating away in the direction from which these came I had not been surprised. Eagerly I turned and followed where they led me.

Soon I heard Bose again, a half-mile behind; he, too, had caught the trail. Baying eagerly, he galloped by a few minutes later, interjecting into his uproar by some strange method of dog elocution a whine of recognition and an invitation to follow.

So he went on down the pasture. No leaf bud had opened, though many were agape, ready to burst with the pulse of

new life that throbbed through the twigs and heightened their colors. The swamp blueberry bushes and the wild smilax were the greener for it, just as the maples and birches were the redder. With your ear to the bark you might hear the thrumming of the sap in the cambium layers, practicing a second to the drone of bees to come a little later. And still the fairy fine scent lured me, and I could hear Bose's voice, eager to incoherence, just ahead. If you did not know about his visions you would surely think he had a fox in his jaw and was shaking him.

Down a sunny slope, robed in the diaphanous gray-green of bursting birch-buds, the fairy odor led me to a little bower on the bank, where for a moment I saw the nymph herself stand, rosy pink, slender and sweet, gowned in the birch-bud color all shimmered with the yellow

of alder pollen drawn in filmy gauze about her. Strange goblins in silvery brown danced in grotesque gambols at her feet, while behind the bank I heard the splashing of Bose in shallow water, frenzied howls of excitement and ecstasy followed each time by another of the clumsy goblins somersaulting up from below to join the dance. Fairy-land and goblin town had indeed come together in celebration of the arrival of the spring!

On the threshold of this realm I trod a moment bewildered, and then, stumbling, broke the spell with a hasty exclamation. The enchantment vanished like a dream. Standing by the brookside I saw only the homely world again. Yet it was a strange enough sight. Up at the dam the gate had suddenly been closed, and a dozen three-pound fish, on their way up to spawn, had been marooned in the shallow

water. These Bose was shaking up in wild delight and tossing up on the bank, where they danced in clumsy, fish-out-of-water dismay. These were the dancing goblins; nor had I been very far wrong about Daphne. There she stood still, slender and dainty, only, just as when pursued by Apollo of old, she had turned into a shrub. There she stood, the Daphne mezereum of the elder botanists, the clustering blooms of pink sending forth their faint, sweet odor that had come so far down the pasture to Bose and me and sent us hunting visions.

To be sure, it was the first of April! But the joke was not all on us, for Bose had for once found real game, albeit such as foxhound never hunted before, and I had found the spring. Two bluebirds, house-hunting among the willows, caroled in confirmation of it, and Apollo himself,

shining through the gray mist of birch twigs, kissed Daphne rapturously.

She was so sweet that I did not blame him. As for Bose, he actually came up and licked the blushing twigs, then in sudden confusion at being caught in such sentimental actions, tore off on the make-believe trail of more visions, leaving me to rescue his gamboling goblins and put them back into their native water.

EXPLORATIONS

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TO-DAY I remind myself forcibly of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G. C., M. P. C., whose paper entitled "Speculations on the Sources of the Hampstead Ponds" was received with such enthusiasm on the part of the Pickwick Club, for I have made new discoveries of the sources of Ponkapog Pond. These are quite as astounding to me as were the Hampstead revelations to the Pickwick Club, and just as those sent Mr. Pickwick and his friends forth on new voyages, so these led me to a hitherto undiscovered country.

In spite of our increasing population and our progressive business activity, there are portions of eastern Massachusetts towns that are forgotten. Often

these are large tracts where the foot of man rarely treads and the creatures of the wilderness roam and prey, breed and die undisturbed by civilization. They may hear the hoot of the factory whistle morning, noon, and evening, or the faint echoes of the distant roar of trains, but they give no heed.

Their world is the wilderness and their problem that of living with their forest neighbors. Man hardly enters into their arrangements. Now and then one of these tracts has a past that is related to humanity, though the casual passer would never suspect it. The wilderness sweeps over the trail of man gleefully and his monuments must be built high and strong or they will be swept away with a rapidity that is startling.

It is only by perpetual efforts that we hold on to our landmarks. The rain will

come in between the shingles and, beginning with the roof, sweep your house into the cellar just a mass of brown mold before you know it. Then the frost and sun tumble the cellar wall in upon it, and where once your proud dwelling stood is a grass-grown hollow. To-day's generation trips on the capstone of what was the tower of its ancestors and thinks it merely a projection of the earth's rib, which it is and to which it has returned.

I fancy every old Massachusetts town has these woodland places that were once the hopeful clearings of early settlers. Now and then, roaming the deep wood where only the creatures of the primal forest seem to have freehold tenure, I find an alien has strayed from the elder years, a hermit of the wood and of our own time. I know a purple lilac that dwells thus serenely, miles from present-

day habitations, in a scrub forest that was fifty years ago a stretch of cathedral pines. Only long search showed me the faint hollow in the brown earth which was once the narrow cellar of a wee house. No record of an early householder here remains other than that planted by the hopeful housewife's hand, — the lilac shrub.

For more than a century it has held the ground where its fellow-pioneers planted it, holding close within its pinky heart-wood memories of English lanes white with hawthorne and, far beyond these, indistinct recollections of rose-perfumed Persian gardens, the home of its race. Perhaps upon its ancestral root rested the feet of Omar Khayyam when he wrote:

> And when like her, O Saki, you shall pass
> Among the guests star-scattered on the grass,
> And in your blissful errand reach the spot
> Where I made one — turn down an empty glass.

Perhaps within the fragrance of a blossom that sprang from the same stock old Cromwell and his Ironsides paused some May morning and breathed deep and sang a surly hymn. We propagate the lilac from the root, not the seed, and the same sap has flowed through the veins of the present strain for a thousand years. A whiff of lilac perfume in a woodland tangle next month, and out of the wilderness we step, from one ancient garden to another, back by centuries into the pleasant places of a world long gone.

To many a New England child the smell of lilacs brings homesickness, and he does not know why. It is because it is the May odor of the vanished home garden, not only of Myles and Priscilla of Plymouth, but of a thousand generations of his own stock before them.

The woodland of to-day's discoveries

is not such. I do not believe pioneer ever stoned a cellar in its depths, and if the Indian set his teepee here it was only in passing. Now and then the harrying hand of man has cut off its greater growth and let the sunlight in on its roots, that the adventitious buds may have a chance, and newer and stronger trunks tower upward eventually, but the shadows that dapple its brown-leaf mold carry no dreams of human domination.

The vexation of axe and gun, and even the searing scar of flame, are only minor incidents in the great work of the wood, whose ultimate purpose no man knows. We see the rocks disintegrated and the hollows filled with richer soil, that the forest may grow taller and more surely shelter the gentler things of earth. We find it holding back the waters in its cunningly contrived bogs, and hiding medic-

inal plants in its hollows, waiting always with benediction in its leaves for the comforting of weary men; but we feel when we know the woods best that these, too, are but its casual benefits; its great purpose lies deeper, and the more we seek it the better we know we are.

Great men come out of the forests of the earth. If they are not born there they seek the place before coming to their greatness. Lincoln hews rails, Washington surveys and scouts, and Roosevelt ranches in the Western wilderness. Perhaps it is for these and their kin that the woods exist. It is always Peter the Hermit that leads the crusade, and without crusades the world were a poor place. It seems as if all our prophets must wrestle at least forty days in the wilderness before coming forth with brows white with the mark of immortality.

It lies at the southeast corner of the pond, beginning at the little bogs, from which it springs abruptly. Along the water's edge of these bogs picknickers row their boats all summer long, and catch fish and eat sandwiches. Inland, a foot or two, the duck hunter in the autumn treads precariously along the quaking surface with his eyes on the margin, or perhaps on the ducks that swim in the open pond, but rarely does any one penetrate the bog-carpeted swamp of great cedars just back of this quaking margin.

And this is strange. The passion for exploration is born in all hearts. We are prompted to go to Tibet, or seek the sources of the Nile, or penetrate the jungles that lie between the Amazon and the Orinoco. I have felt this impulse strongly myself, and longing for distant lands have passed unnoticed this oppor-

tunity right at hand for penetrating an untrodden wilderness. With most of us the undiscovered country lies just a step off the beaten track. So across the rolling bog and into the twilight greenness beneath the cedars I sailed to-day, venturing as Columbus did over a known sea to an unknown, and thence to a new world, — one where straight, limbless cedar trunks stand close like temple columns under a gray-green roof of twigs and leaves.

All the upper tones are gray and green, for this is the world of the mosses and lichens. The ground is built of them, and the temple columns are so covered with their arabesques and bas-reliefs, so daintily frescoed and carved, that it seems as if here were a museum of all designs for the beautifying of interiors that ever occurred. And as all the tree trunks are gray and green till the texture and color

of bark is hardly to be discerned, so the carpeting of the floor of this temple and the upholstering of its furniture is brown and green. The thin rays of the sun that filter through here and there are greenish gold, till the whole gives an under-water atmosphere to the place, and you walk about as a diver might on the sea-bottom, with things new and strange floating at every hand.

Mosses in the ordinary woodland we are apt to pass with unseeing eye. They decorate rocks and trees, dead stumps and earth with such unobtrusive good taste that we come back feeling the beauty of the woodland, and not at all knowing what made it. Some fence corner or group of trees or shrubs or a stump has touched us with its beauty, and so well dressed it is in its moss clothes that we have not seen them at all, but have come

away only with the recollection of how well the rock or the stump looked, and we cannot say whether it wore a plaid or a check or just plain goods.

In this swamp, however, it is as if the whole woodland wardrobe were hung up for inspection, an Easter opening of all kinds of wood wear. Here the *Usnea barbata* trails its old man's beard from the cedar limbs well up in the arches above the pillars, its drooping softness having the effect of delicate tapestry. Clinging lichens, those delicate unions of algal cells and fond fungi, paint the northerly sides of the tree trunks all the way down, while the freer-growing fringe or fleck the southern exposures. *Parmelias* to north, *cetrarias* and *stictas* to the south might well guide the wanderer, giving him the points of the compass and leading him thus to his path again.

Under foot the *sphagnums* build the bog and hold chief sway, but other common varieties dispute the footing with them. Here is the *acutifolia* with its pointed leaves giving the tufts the appearance of a bunch of pointed petaled chrysanthemums, the greens and purples softly shading into one another and showing a fine contrast with the drier, yellower portions of the plant. Here, too, is the edelweiss-like *squarrosum* in its loosely-crowded clusters of bluish green, and the robust *cymbifolium.*

All these grow from their own débris in the wettest portions of the footing. Wherever there is, in this many-colored and lovely carpet, a dead cedar trunk the dainty cedar moss, creeping everywhere, has occupied the space with its delicate fern-like leaves, making of all ugly rotten wood the loveliest furnishing imaginable

for these solemn, twilight spaces. Cushion mosses pad with their bluish-green velvet hassocks here and there, and, sitting on one of them that I might put all my wit into seeing, I noted for the first time, though growing all about me, in fact, a moss that I had never seen before, — the *mnium.*

Its delicate, translucent green leaves are little like those of a moss at first sight. One thinks it rather some rare and delicate flowering plant of the wet bog, now but thrusting up its delicate leaves, to bloom later. I dare say the *mnium punctatum* is a common bog moss. Very likely I have trampled it ruthlessly under foot before this in following some more showy denizen of the deep woods; but to find it thus, exploring a new swamp for the first time, it gave me as great pleasure as I might have had in finding

a new orchid hiding about the sources of the Orinoco.

It was the *sphagnums* that led me to the brookside and caused me to recall that lusty scientist, Mr. Pickwick, and his discovery of the sources of the Hampstead ponds. And while I stood and wondered I saw a second brook, only a little further on, also flowing downward into the *sphagnum* and losing itself in the bog, to pass beneath the cedar roots and moss débris and enter the pond.

Some ancient traveler, perhaps Marco Polo, passing from Babylon to Bagdad, coming first upon the Euphrates and then the Tigris, may have felt some of the amazement and delight which I had in this discovery. Never before had I known of a brook entering the pond. It had always been a sheet of water self-contained and sufficient in itself, fed, I

thought, by springs beneath its own surface. I had paddled by and tramped over the mouths of these two brooks a hundred times and never knew before why the pond always smiled and dimpled as I went by. No wonder it laughs; it has kept that same joke on ninety-nine of a hundred of the people who frequent it, and I am not sure there is another hundredth.

It seemed as if all the woodland burst into guffaws of laughter, now that the joke was out and there was no further need of keeping quiet about it. The cedars rocked in the west wind with suppressed merriment and a couple of red squirrels snickered like school children and tore up and down the lichen-covered trunks and fell off into a swamp birch and had hardly strength to hold on, so breathless were they. A pair of crows

looking up nesting material, haw-hawed right out over my head till they had to stop flapping and sail, they were so weak from it, and a whole flock of chickadees tittered all along behind my back for a quarter of a mile as I went on up the swamp on the left bank of the Euphrates.

It was amusing, and after a little I could see the joke and laugh myself. The Tigris was on my right, and by-and-by the two began to prattle down over a hard bottom from higher ground. Only for a little way, though, for here we came to another wide swamp which the two traversed under low sprouts of swamp maple and birch, the ground having been cut over within a few years.

And right here I ran into a full chorus, a raucous cacophony, an Homeric din that sounded as if all the rough-voiced goblins between Blue Hill and the Berkshires were

assembled in convention up stream and had just heard the story, particularly well told. I knew them. They were the wood frogs, holding their annual convention, indeed, in the water all along the marshy margin of the swamp. Once a year they come down, as people go to the seashore, disporting themselves in the waves and making very merry about it. They were not laughing at me. They were simply shouting their happiness at being thawed out and finding it springtime once more.

Their voices, pitched about an octave below middle C, and all on one note, sound not unlike a great flock of ducks gabbling wildly, but they are really more nearly musical than that. After the convention is over they go back to the woods, where you will find them sitting among the leaves, though you will never see them till they see you. And when you do see

them they are in the air. They have surprisingly long legs and can jump tremendously, turning in the air as they go, so that, having landed, their next leap will take them in a new direction. The earth seems to swallow them as they touch it, for their coloration is that of the brown leaves, and they leap from one invisibility to the next.

Beyond the frog chorus I found my stream again, dancing daintily along hemlock shaded shallows and rippling over slate ledges in the latticed shade of oak and maple twigs, and here another voice called me, a staccato whistle with a suspicion of a trill in it now and then, the voice of the very spirit of the spring woodland, — the *hyla*. I have called it a whistle, yet it is hardly that; it is rather the soft rich tone of a pipe, such as Pan might have imitated when he first blew into the hollow reed on the brook margin.

He is a shy fellow, this inch-long brown frog that swells his throat till it is like a balloon and pipes forth this mellow note, and he is even more invisible than the wood-frog. You may seek him diligently for years and not find him, for his voice is that of a ventriloquist and he seems to send it hither and thither. It is as if this were a trick of some frisky Ariel of the wood that danced about and whistled, now before and now behind you. When the trill comes in it you may well think the tricksy spirit is laughing at you so that his voice shakes. It would be no surprise if some trilling note ended in a giggle and Ariel himself should float by you on the mocking air.

The great chorus of spring peepers is to come later; now, but an occasional one has waked from his frosty nest beneath the woodland leaves and come down to

the water margin to sing. Nor do I know whether it was the ventriloquial call of one that sounded now ahead and now behind, now above and now below, or whether relays of jovial invisible sprites passed me on from pool to pool. What I do know is that, a mile or more beyond its outlet under the ooze of the little bog, I found the source of my Euphrates in springs that boil clear through the sand and send forth the cool, pure water for the delectation of all who will come to drink.

Here upon the margin I heard another chorus that repaid me for all the rough laughter of the wood-goblin frogs, — the plaintive melodies of a little flock of vesper sparrows, newly arrived and very happy about it. These come later than the song sparrows, and bring a quality of wistfulness in their song which in this

differs from the bluff heartiness of the earlier bird. It is as if their joy in the strong sun and the awakening of creation was tempered and softened to a touch of tears at some gentle remembrance. The vesper sparrows recall the vanished happiness of past summers in their greeting to that which comes.

After that my way led me home through the purpling woodland toward the golden greeting of the sunset. I had tasted to the full the joy of exploration and discovery. I doubt if Humboldt felt any better coming back from his exploration of the sources of the Caspian. My Euphrates I know; my Tigris I have reserved for future, perhaps even greater joy of tracing to its source in the mystic depths of, to me, untrodden woodland.

EARLIEST BUTTERFLIES

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JUST as in midsummer the people of the little pasture and woodland hollows must envy those of the hilltop their cool, breezy outlook, so in mid-April the thought must be reversed. For still the warfare between the north wind and the sun which began in February skirmishes and reached its Gettysburg in late March, goes fitfully on, with Appomattox hardly in sight.

The South is to win in this fratricidal struggle though, and in the summer millennium of peace and prosperity the two forces will join hands and work for the good of the whole land. Already the warriors of the North are driven to the hilltops, where they still shout defiance, and whence they rush in determined raids

on the valleys below. It is a losing fight, for all day long the golden forces of the sun roll up the land and fill all the hollows and hold them in serene warmth and peace. However hard last night's frost, however stiff the gale overhead, I can always find bowl-shaped depressions where summer already coaxes the winter-worn woodland.

The very first squatters in this land, whose presence antedates those people of record who held land by deeds and grants, seem to have found and loved these little sun-warmed hollows too, for in them I find the only traces of this pioneer occupation. Records in ink or on parchment of these pioneers are few, indeed, and these which they left on the land itself are but slight. Here a depression may show where a tiny cellar was dug, though no trace of stone work will be found. It was easier for the pioneer to frame his cellar

wall of logs, just as he built those of the house above it.

You may find by careful search the worn path to the spring nearby, for that which is written on the earth itself remains visible long after inscriptions on stone are gone. The wind and the sun, the frost and the rain, will erase the carving from your marble tablet. But the path across a plain, once worn deep and firm by many passing feet, will always show its tracing to the discerning eye. Perhaps a huge old apple-tree stump may have lasted till now, even showing faint signs of life, and round about what was the immediate dooryard the trees of the wood may cluster; but they will hold back and leave some open space, as if they still respected invisible bounds set by the long departed human occupant.

There seem to be many such sleepy hollows in my town, spots where dreams

dwell and the once trodden earth clings tenaciously to the prints of long-vanished feet. Over their tops to-day the north wind sings his war song, but his failing arrows fall to earth harmless, for golden troops of sunshine roll over the southern rim and fill the space below with quivering delight.

Just to walk about in this sunshine is a pleasure, and to sit in the pioneer's hollow land and let it flood your marrow is to be thrilled with a primal joy that is the first the race has to remember. It antedates the first man by unknown millions of years. The same sun touched with the same joy the first primordial cell. With the thrill the one quivered into two and thus came the origin of species.

To-day in such a hollow and under such a sun the pageant of woodland life passed before me, much as it may have passed

before the pioneer as he sat on his log doorstep and rested perhaps from labors in the cornfield, whose hills of earth still checker the level, sandy plain behind his hollow. Strange that the brawny, seventeenth-century adventurer should be but vanished dust and a dream, while the loam that he stirred with careless hoe holds the form that he gave it more than two hundred years ago! Five or six times his cornfield has matured a forest, and the great trees have been cut down and carted away, and yet the corn hills linger. Thus easily does the clay outlast the potter.

When I first marched into the tiny clearing the place was silent, brown and deserted, but that is the way of the woodland, and we soon learn to understand it. A certain aboriginal courtesy is required before you are allowed to become one of the company. Thus among the Eskimos you

enter an assembly and sit quietly a moment until one of those already present notices and speaks to you. In this way you are admitted to fellowship. It is very bad taste for the newcomer to speak first.

So at first I noticed only the brown of last year's grasses, the dead stems of goldenrod and aster, of St. John's-wort and mullein. A tiny cloud slid across the face of the sun and a scout of the north wind blew down the slope and chilled the golden glow of sunlight with which the hollow had seemed filled to the brim. Looking down into it from a sheltered spot on the rim, I had thought the place full of dreams of June. As I sat down in the shadow on the pioneer's grass-plot with the scouting north wind at my back, it was rather a recollection of November.

A dead leaf, frightened by that scurry-

ing wind, dashed down over the tree tops and lighted, a brown splash on the pale, dead grass. Then all in a moment the cloud blew by, the north wind saw the enemy all about him in force and dashed over the rim of the hill, the amber warmth of the sun descending and filling the cup to the brim with the gentle ecstasy of returning summer.

In the still radiance the brown leaf floated into the air again, hovered a moment before my very eyes, and lighted near by on the gray bones of what had once been the pioneer's apple tree. Thus I received my introduction. I had been spoken to by one of the people of the place, received my accolade as it were, and was privileged to see clearly. For the brown leaf was not a brown leaf at all, but a hunter's butterfly.

It is astonishing to find already so many

forms of frail life stirring in the sun, though just a night or two ago the thermometer registered ten degrees of frost, and the ground was frozen solid the next morning. Here was my hunter's butterfly, a wee dab of pulpy cell that a touch of my finger could crush, borne on wings of gossamer frailness that might be whipped to tatters by a wind-snapped twig, yet sailing serenely about, defying anything to harm him.

The strange part of it is that he has been somewhere hereabouts all winter long. All about in the pastures are the frail ghosts of last year's cudweed, on which as a caterpillar he fed. But it is six months at least since he cast off his chrysalis skin and emerged in his present form to face bitter winds and a constantly lowering temperature, days of chilling rain, smothering snow, and ice that coated

all things with an inch-thick armor for days. All the wrecks that these might have caused him he has in some mysterious fashion escaped, and here he is, as merry as a grig.

He did not seem to be hungry, unless, like me, he was eager to devour the sunshine. He sat on the gray, weather-worn, fallen trunk of the ancient apple tree, his wings gently rising and falling, while I noted the beauty of his rich reds with their black and white markings and margins of black just tipped with a blueish tinge on the tips of the fore wings. Then he closed them for a minute, showing me the dark blurring of the under parts that had made me think him a dead leaf as he blew over the ridge with the wind, though now I could note the blue ocelli of the after wings.

It was only for a moment that he rested

motionless thus, and it was hard not to think him a chip of ancient bark or a fragment of a leaf, then he flipped himself into the air and was off over the hill again in a tremendous hurry. All butterflies get occasional aerograms and go off as if on a matter of life or death in response to the messages, but it seems as if these overwinter chaps were especially subject to them in the first warm days. Later an angle-wing came down into my valley, but he did not stay long enough for me to find out which of the *Graptas* he was, — whether the question mark or the comma, *Grapta interrogationis* or *Grapta comma.* I should call him the comma, for his stop was of the shortest, if it were not that my doubt of his identity leaves me with the query.

The rush of his business was even greater than that of *Pyrameis huntera,*

and with one flip of his crooked-edged wings he was out of sight.

Three other butterflies I saw during the day in the neighborhood of my sunny hollow. One, the mourning cloak, *Vanessa antiopa,* I always expect to see on warm days in the sunny brown woods of April, and am rarely disappointed. Another which took the air from the hillocked ground of the two-century-old cornfield I thought to be *Vanessa j-album,* more familiarly known, perhaps, as the Compton tortoise. I would have been glad to know this surely, for this butterfly is rather rare here; but bless me, he went off over the hills at a rate that shamed the flipperty angle-wing. These dilly-dallying butterflies of the poet, indeed! They are the busiest creatures of the whole woodland.

Last of all was a little red chap that shot through the rich gold of the sunlight quite

like an agitated bullet, his motor doing its very prettiest with the muffler off and both propellers roaring. Orville Wright could not have caught him. It was but a brief glimpse that I got, but I took him for one of the skippers, perhaps the silver-spotted, which is common here, though I have never seen one so early before. He was burly, thick-necked, short-winged, which is characteristic of the hesperids.

I would be glad to know what these early butterflies find to eat. Certain flowers are now in bloom, but you never find a mourning cloak or a hunter, a question mark or a painted lady fluttering about them. The bees are in the willow blooms and the alder catkins after pollen. The maples are in bloom. You can find hepaticas and violets, chickweed, crocus, snowdrop, and, I dare say, dandelions in blossom, and almost every day some new shrub

or shy herb sends perfumed invitation out on the messenger winds.

Yet I find April butterflies most partial to such sunny spots as the ancient corn-field, where pines and scrub oaks will give no hint of bloom for weeks to come, and only dry lichens seem to flourish on the twig and chip-encumbered earth. Here the dainty cladonias thrive, the brown-fruited lifting tiny cups to the sun, while the scarlet-crested help this and the fringed variety to make crisp, tiny, fairy gardens that will show you great beauty if you will put your nose to the earth as the butterfly does in looking at them.

Perhaps these earliest spring butterflies sip from brown cups or draw from frost-moistened scarlet crests some potent elixir which warms the cockles of their wee hearts during the frigid nights of our Massachusetts Aprils. I hope so. I never

catch them sipping honey at this time from any of the recognized sources. Perhaps the full flow of sap which is fairly bursting the young limbs of all trees now leaks enough to give syrup for the tasting, and they are thus more fortunate than their brethren, who will come later and dance attendance on lilac and milkweed. Maple sugar is better than honey.

There will be blossoms enough for them in the little hollow by and by, though at first it looked so brown and sere. Little by little, after my initiation at the antennæ of *Pyrameis huntera*, I began to see them, a rosette of green under my elbow, perhaps, or a serrate tip farther on. All under the brown grass the green rosettes of biennials and perennials have waited all winter long for a time like this. Out of the cores of growth built with slow labor in the increasing chill of autumn they are

now sending new leaves, one after another in rapid succession, that top the brown grasses and begin to wreathe them with the tender green of spring.

There is joy in their very coloring as they stretch up to meet the enfolding warmth of the sun. Here an early buttercup waves a cleft and somewhat pinnate hand to me with jaunty assurance, though in the heart of its cluster is as yet no sign of the ascending stem that is to bear the glossy, yellow bloom aloft. Dandelion leaves shake their notched spears all about, proud that their buds are already visible, though still tucked down in the heart of the plant and showing no sign of yellow.

Here are the wee strawberry-like leaves of the cinquefoil, pale counterpart of the buttercup to which it looks up in gentle envy and admiration. The cinquefoil follows hard upon the heels of the violet, and

already its buds are eager to be up and open. The linear root leaves of aster and goldenrod sit snug and green, growing a bit, but in no hurry to appear above the brown vegetation of last year. Their watch comes late, and there is no reason for them to be stirring thus early. And so the growth of lush green leaves is pushing up all over the dooryard of the old-time settler getting ahead of the lazy wood grasses that have hardly begun to put out tiny spears that eventually will stab through the old fog and help the others to make a new tapestry carpet for the empty woodland spaces.

Loveliest of all these now, and, indeed, the most germane to the spot, is the mullein. All winter long it has sat serene and self-sufficient, under the snow, armor-encased in pellucid ice, or in the bare, bitter nights when the stars of heaven were one

solid coruscation of silver and the still cold bit very deep. Clad in kersey like the pioneer, its homespun clothing has defied the weather, holding the cold away from its thin leaf with all this padding of matted wool which makes the plant seem so rough and coarse. In the summer it will defy the fierce heat of the July sun with the same armor, sitting here with its feet in the burning sand and its tall spike tossing back the sunshine with a laugh from its golden efflorescence.

Like the pioneer, the mullein came from the Old World, well fitted to bear the rigors and defy the dangers of the New. Like him it took root, and its seed holds the land in the rough places, brave and beautiful, though rough-coated, tender at heart, and helpful always.

So, when the sun has gone over the western ridge and the north wind scouts

have again mustered courage to invade the place, I leave the little hollow to the wilderness that still enfolds dreams of the one-time occupant. In its sheltered nooks some of the day's golden warmth will remain, even until the sun comes again. I cannot tell where my busy butterflies will spend the night, but if I were one of them I should flip back into the dooryard of the pioneer's homestead and cuddle down in the great heart of one of those rosettes of mullein leaves, there to slumber, warm and serene, wrapped to the eyes in its blankets of soft wool.

APRIL SHOWERS

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AT nightfall the wind ceased, ashamed perhaps of its prolonged violence, and we felt the soft presence of April all about. Someone had suddenly wrapped the world in a protecting mantle of perfumed dreams.

Hitherto it had been struggling to realize spring, succeeding here and there indeed, but always against cold disfavor and sullen opposition. Now, in a breath almost, joys and relaxation had come to all out-door creatures, and the air itself was suffused with tears of relief that brimmed over and made little laughing patterings on bare twigs and brown grass. Till then we had had no green of spring. The woodland world had been pink, and am-

ber, and full of soft yearning of colors in hope and promise; flowers had struggled bravely forth here and there, but they had smiled patiently on a land brown with pasture grass of last year.

Yet in a night the full warmth of April fondness and her tears of joy at being really home again changed all that. Under the patter of wee showers the wan grasses of last year laid weary heads upon the black earth beneath them and went to sleep, while up in their places sprang the lush green spears of this year, glinting back a million joyous facets to the next morning's sun that thus seemed to sprinkle all things with gleam of jewels.

They came very softly at first in the black dusk, these April showers, growing out of the air so close to my cheek that their touch upon it was infinitely fine and soothing. Thus the dew touches the grass

on still nights in summer. To be alone in the pasture on such a night is to become one with all the primal gentleness of the universe. I could feel the happiness of the pasture shrubs and perennial herbs and germinating annuals, growing now on the warm bosom of mother earth, tucked away beneath the perfumed robe of April night.

The night before the cold sky was blown miles high in the air by the rough winds, and the pasture people sighed and shrank and shivered. The night out of which April showers were to be born descended like a benediction, and swathed all humble things in caressing warmth that was tremulous with moisture and perfume.

With the rain came gentle woodland sprites; and while it played them a merry, ghostly tune, they worked in harmony. They pressed the wan brown grass lov-

ingly down and patted the black earth over it till it went to sleep. They pulled lustily at germinating blades, and in their labor, there under the darkness, they painted out in a night the brown of last year with the verdant pigment of this. They hammered and pried at the tough, varnished outer husks of buds, and finally worked them open and began unfolding the soft yellow-green of the young leaves within.

Thus the tips of huckleberry twigs, which had given a soft shade of wine red to the pasture all winter long, lost this tint and bourgeoned into palest green, and the shadbush buds began to shake loose their racemes of bloom. The little people worked in squads, and showers played their merry tunes hither and yon as they labored.

All through the night the fresh smell of the open pores of earth met you every-

where, and moist air built upon this all other odors and carried them very far. An opened kitchen door in the distance let out not only a rainbow-edged blur of yellow light, but the smell of fresh-baked bread cooling on the table before being put away in the big stone crock in the pantry by some belated New England housewife.

With the lullaby roar of the distant brook came the odor of the willow blooms, and with a shift of wind the faint resinous perfume of the pine wood. The darkness which blots outlines from the sight leaves the location of things to the other senses which serve faithfully. Scent and sound are as apprehensive as sight. Often, walking in the darkness, one may feel faintly the obscure workings of a sense which is none of these, whereby he dodges a tree trunk or a fence corner which he feels is there, yet through none of the five ordi-

nary senses. The darkness gives us antennæ.

The April showers touch with caressing fingers the chords of all things and bring music from them, each according to its kind. In the open forest under deciduous trees the dead leaves thrummed a ghostly dirge like that of the "Dead March in Saul." Winter ghosts marched to it in solemn procession out of the woodland. Memories of sleet and deep snow, ice storm, and heartbreaking frost, tramped soggily in sullen procession over the misty ridge and on northward toward the barren lands to the north of Hudson's Bay. Thrilling through this solemn march below I heard the laughing fantasia of young drops upon bourgeoning twigs above, dirge and ditty softening in distance to a mystic music, a rune of the ancient earth.

In the open pasture the tune changed

again. It was there a chirpy crepitation that presaged all the tiny, cheerful insects whose songs will make May nights merry. These, no doubt, take their first music lessons from the patter of belated April showers on the grass roofs of their homes.

But it was down on the pond margin that I found the most perfect music. Slender mists danced to it, fluttering softly up from the margin, swaying together in ecstasy, and floating away into a gray dreamland of delight. It was the same tune, with quaint, syncopated variations, that the budding twigs and the brown pasture grasses had given forth, but more sprightly and with a bell-like tinkle more clear and fresh than any other sound that can be made, this tintinnabulation of falling globules ringing against their kindred water.

Every drop danced into the air again on

striking and in the mellow glow of a obscure twilight I could see the surfa stippled with pearly light. Then throug it all came a new song; the first soloist o the night, the first of his kind of the season, thrilling a long, dreamy, heart-stirring cadenza of happiness, the love call of the swamp tree frog.

As the pattering music of the April showers on the waiting land is a rune of the ancient earth, so the love song of the swamp tree frog dreams down the years to us all the way from the carboniferous age. When the coal measures were forests of tree ferns, and the first men paddled through steaming shallows in their shade, the swamp tree frog was a tree frog indeed, and sang his soothing song from their branches. Since then he has degenerated and has lost most of the adhesive power of the tiny disks on fingers

and toes. He no longer clings readily to trees, and is but an awkward climber. So, too, the webbing between his toes has nearly vanished, and he is not a strong swimmer. He haunts the shallows of the swamps and the sunny pools on the margin of the deep cove.

Perhaps he knows that he is degenerate, and that his safety lies mainly in silence and obscurity, for he sings rarely, except in the first heyday of spring, when the air is full of soft mists and warmth that stirs the deep-lying memories of the carboniferous age. He is a beautiful fellow, hardly more than an inch long, often flesh-colored, and with coppery iris tints that should make the mouths of frog-eating creatures water. It is for desire of him I believe that the pickerel haunt the veriest shallows at this time of year, where you may see them of an evening with their

back fins sticking out like the latticed sails of a Chinese junk.

I do not believe there is anywhere to be heard a dreamier or more soothing lullaby than that sung by the swamp tree frogs of a misty April night to the tinkling accompaniment of showers pattering upon the dancing surface of the pond. It begins in a sigh, swells till it stirs a memory, and dies away in a dream of its own happiness.

All the warm, soothing night the swamp tree frogs sang, and the showers made music for the laboring sprites, and when the morning came it was to a world new clothed in all Easter finery. The raindrop sprites had beaten and relaid the pasture carpets that had been so brown with the dust of last year, and now they were so clean and had such a soft, green nap that it was a renewed pleasure to walk on them. Green, too, was the wear of many of the

pasture shrubs, and the fripperies of the shadbush made the more sober ones turn heads to look at her again. Already she had creamed the sage green of her delicate gown with the white of opening buds, and the berry bushes and the wild cherry, the viburnums, and all the other early flowering shrubs felt a touch of their own coming joy in just looking at her.

Loveliest of all these pasture folk was the sweet gale. If you would know how beautiful just catkins can make a slender, modest creature you should hasten into the pasture now and take note of her. Until last night you would have passed her by without noting, so modest and reticent she is.

The other two members of her family have been for months more in evidence. The sweet fern keeps some of her last year's leaves still, and as you pass tosses

a bouquet of perfume to you that you may know she is by. The bayberry holds blue candles to the wind all winter, and the incense of them carries far. But the sweet gale is too modest and shy for such things. She just sits quiet and unobserved, and thinks holy thoughts, and because she does so it seems as if all the warmth and kindness of April sun and April showers touched her first.

The catkins of the sweet fern were still hard and varnished, and had not cracked a smile this morning after the night of April showers. Not a candle of the bayberry had melted or shown flame in all this softness and warmth, yet there stood the gentle sweet gale all aflame with soft amber and pale gold, a veritable burning bush of beauty. There is no perfume from these blossoms, so gently shy and self-contained is the plant. Both the bayberry

and sweet fern will woo you from a distance with rich aroma, but only after the leaves have come, and then only if you bruise them, will you get a message from the shy heart of the sweet gale.

On such a morning it seems as if all the birds were here, flitting back and forth through the soft blue early mists, and singing for pure joy in the soft air and gentle warmth. For the first time the robins sang as if they meant it, not in great numbers, though there are legions of them here, but enough so that you can easily forecast the power of the full chorus which will tune up a little later. Blackbirds and bluebirds caroled, and song sparrows fairly split their throats, and now and then a flicker would sit up on a top bough, clear his throat, throw out his chest and pipe up "Tucker-tucker-tucker-tucker-tucker," then, abashed at the noise he had made,

go off on tiptoe, very much ashamed, as well he might be.

Not a fox sparrow could I see; I think they went on the day before, but a kingfisher was flying from cove to cove, springing that cheerful cry of his, which sounds as if someone were rattling a stick on his slats. A meadow lark piped a clear whistle from the top of a pitch pine, then alternately fluttered and sailed down into the grass for an early bite. The chipping sparrow swelled his little gray throat and trilled a homely, contented note, and there was a clamor of blue jays as the hour grew late.

I find the blue jay a lazy chap. No early morning revelry is for him. Breakfast is a serious matter, not to be entered into lightly or with chattering. Later in the day he is apt to be noisy enough, though he never sings in public. The nearest he

ever comes to it is when, in a crowd of good fellows, he gives you an imitation of some other bird, for the blue jay is a good deal of a mimic. But it is always a burlesque, and it rarely gets beyond the first few notes before a jeering chorus from his companions cuts it off, nor do you ever know whether they are jeering at him or the bird he is burlesquing. I fancy it does not matter to them as long as they have a chance to jeer.

The crows are rather silent now, though occasionally there is a dreadful towrow over a love affair which does not run smooth. Crows are such canny Scotchmen of the woods that you would hardly expect them to throw caution to the winds and have a riot and a duel with much loud talk over a love affair, but it does happen. Among the pines a day or two ago I heard a great screaming and scolding, cries of

anger and distress, and then, before I could reach the scene, silence.

When I got there all I saw was two crows slipping shamefacedly away behind the tree tops. I thought it merely a lovers' quarrel, but the next day I found beneath the pines not far from the spot a handsome young crow dandy, dead. It puzzled me a bit. He bore no marks of shot, but seemingly had died by violence. He was a stout youngster and had been in the prime of life and vigor. This morning, when all the soft glamor of the spring seemed made for lovers, and many of the birds were very happy about it, I heard another crow quarrel going on, and was mean enough to spy on it.

There was a lady, very demure, and there were two lovers anything but demure. Neither could get near enough to the lady to croak soft words of love in her

ear, for the other immediately flew at him in a rage. The two tore about among the trees, hurling bad words at one another. It was distinct profanity. They towered high in air and dove perilously one after the other back into the woods again, screaming reckless oaths. Now and then they came together, and one or the other yelled with pain. It lasted but a few minutes, but it was a very hot scrimmage. Then one of them evidently had enough, and abandoned the fight, taking refuge in a thick fir very near me. No one of the three minded my presence.

The victor went back to his lady love on mincing wings, and though I could not see them I knew that he was received with open favor, for the cooing of cawing that followed was positively uncanny. As a reckless freebooter, a wise and jovial latter-day Robin Hood of the woods, I like

the crow; but his love-making voice, dear me! One of Macbeth's witches might address the cauldron in the same tone. Evidently the discomfited rival thought so too, for he began to jaw in an undertone and flew grumbling away, mostly on one wing. I have no direct evidence, of course, but I think my dead crow came to his untimely end in one of these duels between rival lovers.

I was glad to leave the crows behind me for once, and then in the full sunshine of the later morning I chanced upon a tree full of goldfinches. It was a tree full, also, of most delightful music. Each bird was vying with the other in a spring song that was more in tune with the surroundings than any ever written by Bach or Schumann, a pure outgiving of blossoming delight.

The birds themselves have just come

into new bloom. Like the sweet gale they seem to have put on new color of gold almost in a night, for they made yellow gleams that were like blossoms all about on the bare twigs, their black wings making the color more vivid by contrast. Yesterday it was, or was it the day before, that these lovely singers were going about in sober brown, like sparrows. Now suddenly they are splashes of tropic sunshine.

It is their mating plumage which they will wear until late August puts them in brown again. They are so happy about it, and their rich, variable songs are such a delight that I am glad they do not quit wooing and go to nest-building until late June, the latest, I think, of all our birds.

And while I listened to the goldfinches a tiny bit of the sky fell. It lighted on a leaf by me, and expanded its wings and enjoyed the full sun. It was one of the

least of butterflies and one of the loveliest, the common blue, the winter form, so called because it comes thus in April from a chrysalid that has passed the rigors of winter successfully. Like the blossoming sweet gale the song of the swamp tree frog and the gold of the goldfinch's plumage this tiny, fearless bit of blue is a seal of the actual soft presence of the spring, which comes only when the April showers have made her calling and election sure.

To be sure, we might have a whiff of snow yet, but it will be only the dust blown far from the fleeing feet of those winter ghosts now scuffing the tundra up where the Saskatchewan empties into Hudson's Bay.

PROMISE OF MAY

PROMISE OF MAY

THE first touch of the rose-gray morning air brought to my senses suspicion of two new delights; one, the more sensuously pleasing, to be sought, the other to be hoped for. It was easy to hope for things of such a morning, for there come gracious days in the very passing of April that presage all the seventh heaven of early June.

At such times the pasture people bestir themselves, and no longer march sedately toward the full life of summer, but begin to riot and caper forward. The old Greek myth of fauns dancing on new greensward is not less than fact; by May-day the shrubs caracole. I suspect even the cassandra of wiggling its toes under the

morose morass; and though it may not outwardly prance, it puts on the white of new buds as if it at least were coming out of mourning.

By sunrise the riot of the robin symphony had become a fugue, and there was some chance to hear the other birds. I had hoped for a soloist who should certainly be here. The coming of the earlier bird migrants from the South is sometimes delayed by storms or forwarded by pleasant weather, but those which come now are almost sure to appear at a definite date. There are always Baltimore orioles in the elms about my house on the morning of the eighth day of May. No one has yet seen one on the seventh, though the neighborhood takes an interest in the matter and keeps careful watch. It is a matter of twenty-five years since the observations began, and not yet has the date failed. If

on that morning I do not see the flash of an oriole's orange, yellow, and black among the young apple tree leaves, and hear that musical whistle, I shall think something has gone dreadfully wrong with return tickets from Nicaragua.

Of the brown thrush I am not quite so sure. He rarely calls on me. Instead, I have to seek him out on the first few days of his arrival. He likes the sprout land best, and the flash of rufous brown that you get from him as he flits away among the scrub oaks might well be the color of a fox's brush, yet there is no mistaking his sunrise solo. It is quite the most sonorously musical bird song of early spring, and I have heard it often on the twenty-fifth of April.

I dare say it has always been here as early as that, though some years I have failed of the concert-room and so of the

singer. Always he is here by May-day. This morning his rich contralto rang from a birch tip in the pasture where he or some thrush just like him has sung each May-day morning for I do not know how many years. I listened in vain for the chewink, though he too is due. Like the brown thrush he is a thicket-haunting bird, following soon on the trail of the fox sparrow, cultivating the underbrush by claw as he does.

There is no rest for the weary brown leaves of last year, though they may take passage on the March winds to the inmost recesses of the green-brier tangle of the pasture corners. Through March and early April the fox sparrow harries them, and they have hardly settled with a sigh to a brief nap in his trail before the brown thrush and the chewink are at them with bill and toe-nail, and these are here for the

summer. About a week later, generally on the very sixth of May, easy going mister catbird will appear with great pretence of bustle. He is a thicket bird, too, but unlike the chewink and the brown thrush his farming is all folderol. He simply potters round on their trail, gleaning. Whatever the thicket-bird name is for Ruth, that is his.

There are sweeter singers in the spring woodland than the brown thrush, but I know of none whose rich voice carries so far, and this one's rang in my ears through all my wanderings till the sun was high and the dew was well dried off the bushes. Now and then I must needs forget him and even my quest in my joy over the fresh beauties that the shrubs were putting on, seemingly every moment. It is something to look at an olive-brown pasture cedar which has been as demure as a

nun all winter and spring, and see it suddenly in bloom from head to foot, as if before your very eyes, coming out all sun-clad in cloth of gold. It is no illusion of the sun's rays or the scintillation of the morning dew, but a rich glow of gold out of the sturdy heart of the plant itself.

Last October I had thought nothing could make a cedar more beautiful than that rich embroidery of blue beading on cloth of olive, which these Indian children of the pasture world donned for winter wear. Now I know their May robes to be lovelier. No doubt they are days in coming out, these tiny blooms of the pasture cedars, yet they always reach the point where I notice them in a flash. One moment they are somber and sedate, the next they are all dipped in sunshine and dimple with a loveliness which is the dearer because it is so unexpected.

irresolutely between two parties. Born a dyed-in-the-wool Republican it has yet of late years leanings toward Democracy. So it votes with the conifers on cones and the deciduous trees on leaves.

Sometimes I cut a larch limb to see if this year one is n't turning endogenous, and am never sure but the fruit for the new season will turn out to be acorns instead of cones. You never can be sure in what way these independents will surprise you. It is lucky the trees do not have the Australian ballot on what their year's output shall be. If they did there would be no possibility of predicting what would be the larch crop.

As might be expected, larches are not virile trees, but have a slender beauty which is quite effeminate. Just now their this year's leaves are a third grown, and are very lovely in their feathery softness,

float down the field to the even more rudimentary pistillate flower, but they are big enough to change the gloom of rocky hillsides to a glow of delight, seemingly in an hour. You have but to look about you if you will visit the pasture cedars on May-day, and you may see the place light up with the change.

There is no fragrance to these blooms other than the resinous delight which the leaves themselves distil at the caress of warm suns. It was no odor of the pasture cedars which had given an object to my walk.

The larch is not a native of Massachusetts, but it will grow here fairly well if you plant it, and there are long rows of these trees by the roadside on the way to the pasture. These are all coming forth in the fragile beauty of new ideas. The larch is the mugwump among conifers, dallying

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but lovelier yet are the young larch cones, growing along the branches, sessile among the young green of the leaves, translucent, deep rose-pink cameos of cones, that remind you of an etherealized tiny pineapple, a strawberry, and a stiff blossom carved in coral, all in one.

After all, I am convinced that the larches may do as they please about their leaves, vote with the deciduous trees if they wish to, and flout their coniferous ancestry if they will, provided they continue to grow yearly on May first these most delectable of cones. No blossom of the year can show greater beauty.

Baffled in my search for the origin of the sensuous odor which had lured me and which seemed still to drift hither and thither on the variable air, I got the canoe and paddled over alongshore to a cove that I know, a new-moon shaped hiding place

behind a barrier reef of rough rocks, further screened by brittle willows that struggle forward year after year, waist deep in water, bravely endeavoring to be trees. They almost succeed, too, in that their trunks tower a modest twenty feet and some of their limbs remain on throughout the year. So brittle are the slender twigs, however, that the least touch seems to take them from the parent tree; and as I push my canoe between them in a favorable channel of the reef I collect an armful in it in brushing by. It is a wonder that the March gales have left any.

Past the barrier and afloat on the slender, placid crescent I found a new-moon world with a life of its own. Rough waves may roll outside, but only the gentlest undulations crinkle the reflections on the mirror surface within. The winds may

blow, but rarely a flaw strikes in far enough to ruffle the water. Here, with the sun on my back, I might sit quietly, and soon the normal life of the place, if at first disturbed by my entrance, would go on.

Yet here is no drowsy silence, such as will fill the cove with sleep in August. Passing April may leave things quiet, but they are awake. The first sound which disturbed this quiet was a kerplunk at my side, followed by the grating of a turtle shell over rough rock and a second plunge. Two spotted turtles that had been sunning themselves on a rock at my very elbow as I glided in thus became submarines, and slipped silently away to Ooze Harbor between two sheltering rocks at bottom. These two had been contemplating nature with the sun on their backs, as I planned to, and had been loth to leave such pleasant employment. I think the turtle's brain

may work quickly, but his motions are as slow as those of the Federal Government.

Round about me were the mangrove-like buttonball bushes, showing no signs of green, and the brown heads of hardhack and meadow-sweet blooms of last year bent over their own reflections in the water. Here were gray and brown sackcloth and ashes. Did not the little cove know that Lent was long past? Yes, for here, too, were the maples scattering their red blooms all along the surface; and as I looked again I saw the sage green of young willow leaves just pushing out along the yellow bark of those brittle shoots.

Under the brown heads of the *Spiræa formentosa* and *salicifolia* were vivid leaves putting forth, and just as the pasture cedars seemed to jump into bloom before my eyes, so the little crescent cove

seemed to garb itself in green as I looked. Under water, too, were all kinds of succulent young herbs just coming up, like the water-parsnip, whose root leaves start in the pond bottom, but which, with the receding waters of summer, will grow rank in the mud of the margin.

A leopard frog sounded his call from the roots of last year's reeds, — a gentle drawl which has been compared to the sound produced by tearing stout cotton cloth, and perhaps that is as near as one can come to characterizing it, though the sound is a far more mellow and soothing rattle than that. The hylas have ceased their peeping and the wood frogs no longer croak. They have laid their eggs in the warming waters and gone up into the woods. Hitched to a twig a foot beneath the surface I found a jelly-like mass as big as my two fists, which contained a

thousand or so of the eggs of the green frog, — *Rana clamitans*, — and no doubt those of the hylas and wood frogs were to be found nearby. The new-moon cove is a famous frog rendezvous, and a month from now the night there will be clamorous with the cries of many species. You would never believe there were so many varieties till you begin to hunt them by ear.

A pair of robins came and inspected their last year's nest in a willow over the water, and I saw there a left-over kingbird's, still holding the space, though the kingbirds themselves will not be back to claim it before the fifth or sixth of May. A silent black and white creeper slipped up and down and all in and about the shoreward bushes, gleaning stealthily and persistently, always with a watchful eye out for possible danger. This watchfulness did not cease when the bird finished

hunting and settled down for a noonday nap. It chose for this a spot on the black and white angle of a red alder shrub, where it would look exactly like a knot on the wood. Then it fluffed down into a fat ball of feathers and for a half-hour seemed to snooze, motionless except for its head, that every few seconds turned and looked this way and then that. It was a noonday nap, but it was sleeping with both eyes open.

The kingfisher, always an example of nervous energy, flitted back and forth outside the willow barrier, springing his rattle in short vigorous calls. Once he fell into the water with a splash, and came out again with a young white perch in his mouth. By and by he gave an extra shout and went off over the hill and was gone an hour. Then two came back and the air was vivid with friendly stac-

cato calls. But there seemed to be a disagreement later, for after a little the first bird was alone again. Then he began to fly back and forth, high over the cove, till his white throat seemed a sister to the young moon, paper white in the zenith.

All the kingfisher calls before that had been brief, but now as he flew he clattered like an alarm clock, — the kind that begins at ghostly hours and continues without intermission till you finally get up in despair and throw it out the window. His cry would begin with his leaving the point beyond the cove on one side, continue without a break as he swung high, and only cease when he had dropped to earth again on the other side. Where he got the wind for this continuous vaudeville I cannot say. I have never heard a kingfisher call so long without an interval before, but I take it to have been a far cry sent out for

that vanished mate. Perhaps she answered finally, for he betook himself off after a little, I hope to a rendezvous.

While I listened in the silence for the returning call of the kingfisher, a little shore wind came over my shoulder and brought to me the same delicious, sensuous perfume that I had noticed in the early morning, only where it had then been as slender as a hope it was now rich and full with the joy of fulfilment. I looked back in some wonder at the rocky marsh behind the cove, but now I saw farther than the alders and maples that fringed its edge.

Just as the golden glow of the cedars in the upland pasture had seemed to come all of a sudden, as if turned up by the pressure of a button which made electrical connection, and set the machinery of fantasy at work, so the inner swamp suddenly

grew all sun-stricken with the yellow of the spicebush bloom. Bare twigs bore clusters of it everywhere, and its intoxicating odor thrilled all my senses with rich dreams of June.

So all this day of passing April the sun shone in the placid heart of the little cove with the full fervor of summer. The leopard frog throated his dreamy yawn from the bog, and the rich, soft perfume of the spicebush seemed to wrap all the senses in longing that thrilled and disquieted even while it lulled. There is a call to *vagabondia* in the odor of the spicebush, that gipsy of the wilder wood, which finds ready echo in the hearts of us all. If it bloomed the year round there would be no cities.

While I breathed the witchery to the full there fell from the sky above a gentle call, a single bird note out of the blue,

that made me sit up straight and look eagerly.

A swift wing stabbed the air above the tree tops, and the note sounded nearer. "Quivit, quivit," it said in liquid gentleness, and the first barn swallow of my season slipped down toward the pond and skimmed the surface in graceful flight. May is welcome. She could be ushered in by no sweeter music than the gentle call of the barn swallow, nor could she send before her more dignified couriers than the glowing pasture cedars or more richly sensuous odors than that of the spicebush which makes all the swamps yellow with sunshine in her honor.

BOG BOGLES

BOG BOGLES

A SPIRIT of mystery always broods over the great bog of Ponkapog Pond. Only occasionally does man disturb its quaking, sinking surface with his foot. You may wade all about on it, even to the edge where the billowing moss yields to the scarcely less stable pond surface; but to do so in safety you must know it intimately, else you will go down below, suddenly, to become a nodule in the peat, and perhaps be dug up intact a thousand years from now and put in a museum.

Hence man rather shuns the bog, and it has become, or perhaps I might better say it has remained, the home of all sorts of shy creatures that shun man. It would not be surprising if the little people that

the Ponkapog Indians knew so well, the pukwudgies which were their fairies, the little manitous which were guardian spirits, and the fearsome folk, the Indian bogies, still linger here, though the Indians are long gone.

This morning in the lonesomest spot I thought I heard speech of them all, and though various creatures appeared later and claimed the voices, it is to be believed that these merely came out of the tall grass to go straw bail for them. At this time of year you may reach this lonesomest spot by boat, if you will take a light one with smooth flat bottom and push valiantly through winding passages where you may not row and boldly ride over grassy surfaces that yield beneath you.

It is a different bog edge from that of last summer; a new world. The Nesæa, which made wickets of bog-hopple all

about, is hardly to be seen, and you will wonder at the absence of the millions of serried stems of pickerel weed that held the outer defences with halberds and made them blue with flaunting banners of the bog's advance guard.

If you will look over the boat's side as you glide through open water near the edge you will see these, lying in heaps, blades pointing bravely to seaward almost a half-fathom deep, slain by the winter's cold, indeed, but their bodies a bulwark on which younger warriors will stand firmly in the skirmish line this year. Already the slender spears of these prick upward out of the gray tangle at bottom, and it will not be long before they stab the surface, eager for the accolade of the field marshal sun.

In the little channels up which you glide tiny tides flow back and forth, driven, no

doubt, by the undulations of the waves in the open pond, and here through the dark depths the brownish green clusters of pointed peat-moss roll along like Russian tumble-weeds driven across the Dakotas by prairie winds, to grow again in new soil. On either side are island clumps of meadow grass, and in the shallows you may see, as carefully planted as if by some landscape gardener of the pond bottom, most wonderfully beautiful fairy gardens of young water-lily leaves.

Out of the brown ooze at varied dignified distances apart spring the slender, erect stems, some only a few inches long, others longer, till a precocious few tickle the surface with the upper rim of the rounded leaf. These leaves are set at quaint angles that give the garden a perky, Alice-in-Wonderland effect. The Welsh rabbit and the mock turtle might well come

down these garden paths hand in hand, or the walrus and the carpenter sit beneath the flat shade of these dado-decoration leaves and swap poems.

But, after all, the wonder of it is not the quaint beauty of the arrangement but the bewildering richness of the coloring of these leaves. Only the faintest suggestion of green is in them. Instead, they glow with a velvety crimson maroon in varying shades, a color inexpressibly soft and rich. The blood-red of last year's cranberries that form a floating bead edge to the bog in many places is more vivid, but not so rich. The lilies of next July will be lovely, indeed, but never so sumptuously beautiful or so full of quaint delight.

At the end of the waterway you come to a barrier of cassandra, which blocks your further passage and half surrounds you with a low, irregular hedge. I fear

I have misnamed the cassandra. I thought it dour and morose; but that was in late April. Now it is early May, and by some trick of the bog pukwudgies the gloom of its still clinging last year's leaves is lightened into a soft sage green that is prim indeed, but lovely in its primness, while all underneath these leaves, in festoons along the arching stems, are tiny white blossoms that are like ropes of dripping pearls.

Grim and morose, indeed! The cassandra is like a gentle, pure-souled girl of the elder Puritans, arrayed for her coming-out party, her primness of garb only enhancing the beauty of soul that shines through it and finds visible expression in the pearls. And already lovers buzz about her. Their cheerful hum is like the sound of soft stringed instruments fanned by the warm breeze in this fairy-peopled land of

loneliness. Here I see my first bumblebee of the season, seemingly less dunder-headed out here among the wild blooms than he will be later in the white clover of the lawn.

Perhaps the prim and definite arrangement of the cassandra blossoms, hung so close in long strings that he has a straight road to follow, helps keep his wits about him. Here are honeybees a-plenty, adding the clarinet to his bassoon, and many a wild bee, too, bringing the scintillation of iridescent thorax or wing, and his own peculiar pitch to the symphony. I dare say the hymenopterists know each bee by ear as well as by sight.

In this fairy land of bog tangle the hylas, that I had thought all through with their songs for the year, piped in chorus as each cloud slipped over the sun, and the leopard frogs yawned throatily, dream-

ily, all about in the full sunshine. The hotter it was the more they liked it, and in the brightest part of the day they cut up the yawns into brief words and phrases which made a most language-like gabble.

Of course I could not see this peace congress of leopard frogs and can prove only that it sounded like them. It may very well have been the pukwudgies talking over my presence and wondering if white men were now coming to oust them from their last stronghold in the bog, as they have driven them and the once more visible Indians from the rough hills and sandy plains about the pond. Indeed, as I sat quiet, hour after hour, in this miniature wilderness, I came to hear many a strange and unclassified sound that, for all I know, may have been fay or frog, banshee or bird.

I began to get glints of sunlight reflecting from grassy islands all about. It was as if some very human folk had held high carnival here the night before and sown the dry spots with empty black bottles. But a second look showed these to be spotted turtles, sitting up above the water level, each with his head held up as if he wished especially to get the warmth of the sun on his throat. On such a day one might well envy the turtle for having his bones all on the outside. It is easy for him to let the spring sunshine into his very marrow.

The turtle, in spite of the canticle which, bubbling over with the enthusiastic poetry of spring, declares that "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," is usually reckoned dumb. The commentators have carefully announced that the turtle mentioned is the turtle-dove cooing in the joy

of springtime. That may be, but I do not see how they know, for the turtle, denied a voice by naturalists and scriptural commentators alike, nevertheless has one, and a song of its own.

A turtle, suddenly jolted, will give a quaint little squeak as he yanks himself back into his shell. That is common enough, but this day there were two, sitting up on nearby tussocks, that piped a musical little song of spring, just a soft trill that was eminently frog-like but distinct. I heard it and tried at first to make it the trill of hylas, but it was more of a trill and different in quality. Try as I would I could but locate this quaint little song in the throats of the two turtles. I carefully scared one off his perch and one trill ceased. I scared the other, and both voices were silent, though here and there in the marsh I could

hear others. It may have been the puk-wudgies playing ventriloquial tricks on me from the shade of the swamp cedars just beyond, and laughing in their beaded sleeves at the joke; but if it was not they, I am convinced that my turtles sang, and that Solomon not only knew what he was talking about but meant exactly what he said.

While I was listening to the two turtles and wondering about them, I kept hearing over among the white cedars raucous profanity of the most outrageous sort. Bad words snarled in throaty squawks came oftener and oftener, till by the time the turtles had gone down into oblivion beneath the bog roots the most villainous language from at least two squawkers gave evidence that a low-bred row was going on. I could distinguish accusation and recrimination till it sounded like a

family quarrel between drunken bog bogles.

Then there was the sound of blows, and with a wild shriek of a most reckless word a bittern flapped out, whirled round once or twice as if undecided where he would go, then dropped in the grass down the bog a way. Here he turned his black, stake-like head this way and that for a moment, then pulled it down out of sight. I had known the bittern was misanthropic, but I had never before realized that he was so ill-tempered and profane. I am positive he was beating his wife, and the whole affair sounded like a case of too much bog whiskey.

For an hour there was no sight or sound of this bittern, though uncouth conversation seemed to be going on still in the tangle whence he flew, but I heard no more profanity. Yet out of the heart of the bog

curious sounds came floating at intervals, — sounds which often I had difficulty in getting any known creature to go bail for. I do not mean the ordinary bird voices, though the air was full of these. It seems as if all the small migrants made this a port of call or a refuge, and paid for their safety with music. Warblers trilled their varied notes from the cedars or the thicket of cassandra shrubs, some coming boldly near, others giving sign of their presence only by the glint of a wing or the shaking of a twig, others still invisible but vocal.

Thrush and catbird, song sparrow and chipping sparrow, chickadee and creeper, all helped to fill the air with sound, but it was not to these I listened. It was rather to obscure whinings and grumblings out of the deep heart of the bog, goblin talk very likely that seemed to grow louder and

come nearer. Then after a little I heard splashing, and out into a clear space of grassy shallows came a splendid great muskrat followed by another just as large. In the middle of this tourney ground the two faced each other, and after a second of sparring closed.

It was hardly a scientific fight. They batted and clawed, butted and scratched and bit, whining like eager dogs, and now and then yelping with pain. But it was effective; in a very few minutes one had enough and turned and fled, ploughing a straight furrow through the shallows, to a plunge in a deep hole. The victor followed a few yards, then as if convinced that the retreat was a real one, turned and went proudly back, probably to the lady who was the cause of all this trouble. Muskrats are such gentle creatures that I was amazed to see this happen, but af-

fairs of the heart are serious even in the depths of the bog. I lay a part of the bog bogle talk which still went on in the eerie depths behind the green of the cedars to the other muskrats. It does not seem as if they could have been to blame for it all.

Then I remembered the vanished bittern and began to work my boat toward the part of the bog where he disappeared. Very likely he had committed suicide in repentance for his bad behavior and his profanity. He ought to have, but he was simply sulking, after all. I think he felt so bad about it that his usual wariness was at fault, for I was almost upon him before he saw me. It may have been drunken stupor, but I like to believe it was remorse.

When he did see me his dismay was ludicrous. He almost fell over himself in getting into the air, and he flapped back toward the spot where the quarrel had

gone on with wild squawks that said "Help, help!" as plainly as any language could. Out from among the cedars, in answer to this frenzied appeal, came the other bittern, and then another. I watched the three flapping down the bog and saw them light together at a safe distance. Then I knew the cause of all the trouble in the bittern family. The bog world, like the pasture world and the deep wood, at this time of year is full of blissful love making, but it is also full of heartrending jealousies and fights to a finish. No wonder the pukwudgies and bog bogles are full of talk and excitement back there; there is enough food for gossip.

Sitting quietly in the boat in this new part of the bog I had a queer feeling of being grimly watched by, I could not tell what. I have read tales of travelers in African jungles who felt the eyes of a

lurking boa constrictor resting balefully on them when the creature itself was concealed. It was something like that, and I looked about rather uneasily. Probably the bog voices were getting on my nerves and it was time to go home. Then I glanced over one side of the boat and very nearly jumped over the other, for there were the two grim eyes, in a great horny head as big as my two fists, looking up at me.

I had been amusing myself with imagining that I heard the little people of the bog, but here was the great dragon, the very devil himself, sunning his black hulk on a fairy acre of bog grass. At its further end I saw his tail, as large as my forearm at the base, tapering with alligator-like corrugations to its tip. I saw his great webbed feet as large as my hand and furnished with claws. I saw his thick

neck, and that was all of him in sight. The rest was concealed within a huge mound of black, plated, horny shell that was fourteen inches from side to side and sixteen inches from front to back. These were measurements which I took after I had decided that he did not intend to eat me right away, perhaps not at all.

Chelydra serpentina, the snapping turtle, or the alligator snapper, as he is sometimes called, and with reason, for, except for his casing of shell, he is very like an alligator, is not uncommon in the bog; but I had never before seen so huge or so ancient appearing a specimen. His black shell was worn gray with age and bore two deep scars where some sharp instrument very like a spear had been jabbed into his back. I suspect this to have been an Indian spear, and I fully believe that my black dragon of the bog was a well-

grown turtle before the white man ever saw Ponkapog Pond.

There were parallel ridges in the structure of his shell that seemed to show much wear as if this turtle had carried weight on his back. The Indians have a legend that the world itself is held up on the back of a great turtle. Very well; this is the one. I saw the marks of its friction on his great muddy black structure as I looked him over, there in the middle of the loneliest place in the bog.

I might have taken him by that alligator tail and swung his seventy or eighty pounds into the boat, I suppose. Terrapin is valuable, and the snapping turtle is own cousin to the terrapin. I have a fancy, though, that if he had got into the boat I should have got out. No ordinary Ponkapog boat was likely to hold us both, and I wisely refrained. Nor did he molest me,

but stood his ground, still gazing at me with that cold, critical eye. After a time he moved on, pushing his great weight with ease over the crushed bog growth and sliding with dignity down into the muddy depths of an open channel.

For myself, I turned the boat's prow toward the distant landing and pushed, as he had, over the yielding shallows to the open pond. I had seen a hundred beauties in the lonely bog and been well initiated into its mysteries. For me the spotted turtles had sung, the muskrats had fought a tourney, the bitterns had voiced a family quarrel. And now it was nightfall, and the big old dragon of the bog had looked me over with measuring eye. It was high time that I headed for home if I expected to get there.

BOBBING FOR EELS

BOBBING FOR EELS

IT is fortunate that the angleworm is born without a voice, else throughout the length and breadth of the land were now resounding a chorus of doleful shrieks, for great is the dismemberment of angleworms about this time. The same warmth of imminent summer which made the grass jump six inches in length over night, has brought him forth in great numbers, over night also, for the angleworm is a lover of darkness.

I know Darwin thought earthworm a more proper designation of him, but it is to be believed that Darwin was not a fisherman. Had he been he would have known that the chief end of worm is to become bait. There may be nicer things

to have than these somewhat attenuated hermits of the mold, but if there are the fishes do not know it, and there are few anglers but on May fifteenth would give their weight in gold for them if such was the price. It is fortunate, therefore, that angleworms are inhabitants of the earth, so to speak, and not of any one neighborhood. It is, no doubt, possible to catch fish with other bait. There are grasshoppers, to be sure, though not at this time of year. There are various artificial flies and lures, spoon hooks and other wastrel inventions. Of these little is to be said; indeed, some of them are unspeakable.

On fortunate springs April showers linger into May, finally hastening northward lest summer catch them here and make a wet June of it. The seductive warmth of summer is in them now, and as they go spilling by of perfumed nights

they work all kinds of wonder. Things that were beginning to grow up suddenly blow up. My cherry tree has exploded over night. Two days ago the grass, we noted with delight, was really quite green. This morning it waves in the wind, and I am confident that by to-morrow, at this rate, it will be full of bobolinks and mowing machines. Yesterday you could see far through the woodland. To-day it is clouded with its own green leaves, and along aisles that begin to be shady the truant ovenbirds are shouting "Teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher," in warning to one another every time they hear a human footfall in the path.

The first dragon flies have come, and in woodland places lovely little brown butterflies skip about like mad. No wonder the Hesperidæ are commonly known as skippers. These that I saw to-day, most of

them *Thanaos brizo*, the sleepy dusky-wing, defied any but the most alert eye to follow them as they dashed from invisibility on some dark fallen limb to vanishment on brown mud of the path. They seemed to skip in and out of existence at will. I call them brown, for you will see that they are that if you have a chance to see one sitting at rest. You may get near enough to see the beautiful blueish spots surrounded with dark rings on the fore wings, and the double row of yellow spots on the hind wings. For all that *Thanaos brizo* is as black as your hat to the eye when he is in flight. Perhaps that is why he vanishes so readily. You are looking for a black butterfly, and what you see is nothing but a brown bit of bark or leaf.

Darwin was convinced that the earthworm, as he called him, was of inestimable value to man, and he cites how he works

over the mold and loosens it up, ploughing it, as it were, for future planters who should thus be able to enjoy the fruits of the earth, leveling it and working in various ways for the good of mankind. But Darwin never says a word of the inestimable value of earthworms as angleworms. Thus often do our greatest scientists fail to interpret things at their true value. Very likely Darwin never had an opportunity to bob for eels in a New England pond. If so he would have seen worms as they are, for no man can really know things till he has yearned for them.

In the winter time the angleworm goes down well below the reach of frost which will kill him. Indeed, he is sensitive to the cold, and comes to the surface only when the sun has warmed the earth so that it is comfortable. Under the May moon he comes, sometimes clear out of his hole,

and wanders far in search of friends or new countries. Often of a moist early morning you may find big ones caught out on the concrete sidewalk or marooned in the dry dust of the road, remaining to be an easy prey for early birds.

But these are the adventurous or unfortunate few. The many have remained all night stretched far from the mouths of their burrows, indeed, but with tails still hooked into the door jamb, and able to make a rapid backward scramble into safety. It is this habit of the worm of warm summer evenings that the wise angler utilizes for his capture. The robin knows it too, and he spices his rapture of matin song with trips across the lawn, where, between staccato hops, he eyes the grass sidewise and catches late roisterers before they can get under cover. These he takes by the scruff of the neck, as one

might say, hauls them, stretching and resisting, forth from their homes and swallows them.

Thus with the unrighteous, but even the upright, or rather the downright, who are that, snugly ensconced as they intended to be, he is apt to see and seize, for the robin's eye is good and his bill is long enough. Angleworms, after the joys or labors of the night are over, withdraw into their holes, but often not very far. They like to lie with the head drawn back just out of sight, near enough to the surface to bask in the warmth of the sun.

Some line the outer ends of their burrows with leaves to keep them from the damp of the earth, thus further to enjoy themselves. Some, too, on retiring, draw leaves and sticks in, thus going into their holes and pulling the holes in after them, as the saying goes. Some merely pile

small stones in a sort of an ant heap about the mouth. In the gravel walk these little mounds are often taken for those piled by the industrious ants. The robin gets many of these as he hops, and it is no wonder that his chestnut-red front looms as round as a pumpkin and almost as big.

There are many ways of getting angleworms and many ways of using them after you get them; but he who wants them in bulk will do well to imitate the robin, — only do it in the night instead of the day. Of course you may go out with a spade and assault likely spots in the garden. That is often satisfactory, though crude. It is likely to result in small numbers and not well assorted sizes.

I knew a man once who used to jab for angleworms with a crowbar, and it was a rather astonishing thing to watch him and see the results. The angleworm's

hearing is crude in the extreme. Indeed, hearing in the ordinary sense of the word he has none. Mary Garden might sing at the mouth of his burrow and he would never know it. Sousa's finest march on fifty instruments — count 'em fifty — might be played on the bandstand just over his head and he would never feel one thrill. The only sound he gets is a crunching and grubbing in the earth near him. This he feels, for he is the chief food of the grubbing mole, and that sound means but one thing to him, — that he is being dug for. So when he heard that crowbar wriggling and crunching in the gravel beneath he used to flee to the surface in numbers.

This man always whistled an eerie little tune while he wriggled the bar. He said he was calling them, and it was quite like magic the way in which they hustled to the surface and crawled about his feet. Most

people fail in this method. It takes a peculiar motion to the bar and a good eye in choosing the spot where the worms are. And then, few people know the tune.

Nightfall and the robin's method are best. Wait till the full darkness of a moist night. Hang a lantern about your neck and get down on your marrow bones by a grassy roadside. Worms do not see, and are not sensitive to light. You have but to crawl quietly forward and pick them up with a quick snatch, for the worm can feel, and he gets back into his burrow with an agility which is surprising.

On the right kind of a May night I have seen the roadside of a Massachusetts village the scene of more than one such spectacle. A stranger from the big world, seeing a very fat man crawling by the roadside with a lantern hung about his neck, making frantic dabs here and there, and

hauling forth great worms that resisted and hung on valiantly and stretched like red rubber, might well have said that here was voodoo worship or a Dickey initiate gone mad. But it was nothing of the sort, — merely the crack local fisherman getting his bait.

I have looked in vain in Izaak Walton for a pæan on angleworms or a description of a proper method for making a bob for eels, and I thereby find the " Compleat Angler " incomplete. However, Izaak was an admirable fisherman in the rather patient and conservative way of the England of his time. He advises to bait for eels " with a little, a very little, lamphrey, which some call a pride, and may in the hot months be found many of them in the river Thames, and in many mud-heaps in other rivers; yea, almost as usually as one finds worms in a dung-hill."

He should have seen a Yankee catch eels with a pole and line with a big wad of worms tied on the end of the line and no hook at all, for such is a "bob," as we know it in Norfolk County. The making of a bob is not a pleasant affair for the angleworms, which seem born for destruction, so many are the creatures that prey on them, and I am glad of Darwin's assurance that, in spite of the fact that they wriggle when rent, they have little fineness of perception and feeling and do not suffer — much.

This crack fisherman who was so stout and who used to get his bait by lantern light at night, to whom my memory runs, always made a bob of shoemaker's thread, because it was fine and of great strength. He had a long wire needle like an upholsterer's needle, and with this he would deftly string great angleworms from

head to tail, sliding them one by one down upon his shoemaker's thread till he had a rope of them twelve feet long or so. Then tying the ends together he looped this up till it hung in a wad of loops as big as his two fists. This, hung upon the end of his line, was all he needed for a night's fishing.

The way of its use is this. First catch your night, one of those nights when there is a promise of soft rain in the sky and the wind that is to bring it just sighs gently over the trees from the southward. Too much wind is bad, for it so ruffles the surface that the fish cannot find you. A very gentle ripple, on the contrary, is helpful, for it makes a dancing path of light from your fire, up which the eels may trail you to the very spot where hangs the bob.

The stout fisherman used to take along at least two boys who would be useful in

gathering wood for the fire and in other matters. Then, picking the exactly most favorable spot on the dam where the deep, dark water shoulders the bank, he built his fire after the full darkness had come. In common with many others I regret the passing of the old-time cedar rail fence. Wire abominations may be cheaper, but who ever heard of building a fishing fire out of tariff-nurtured, wire-trust, fencing material? Fishing fire material of the proper sort is rare nowadays, and I can but feel that the youth of the present generation are born to barren years.

With the fire well alight and the deep half-bushel basket placed handy by, the fisherman would make his line fast to the tip of that long, light, supple but strong birch pole and cast the big bob far from him with a generous splash into the water, letting it sink till within a foot or two of

bottom. How far under the dark water the eels might see that flickering fire and be drawn to it as moths circle about a light at night I cannot say, but I think it was very far, for on favorable nights it seemed as if all the eels in the pond must have been drawn thither. I know that fishing without a fire you may catch one eel or perhaps two, but you will never get such numbers as come to a proper blaze made of the dryest of good old cedar rails.

In South American waters there is an electric eel which can give a stout shock to such as touch him; but I think all eels must be electric, else why the shock that one in the deep water off the pond bank can send through a dozen feet of line and as much more of birch pole to your hand the moment he pokes his nose against a bob? It tingles in your palms, and is as good as prescribed electric treatment from

a battery, for it thrills you with a quickening of life and nerve and a magical alertness.

The eel is not nearly so cautious with a bob as with a hook. He nibbles, which is the first shock; he bites, which is the second and stronger; then he takes hold. I can see the stout fisherman now with the fire gleam on his rugged face, his feet planted wide apart and his weight well on the hinder one, his hands wide apart on the pole and his whole attitude that of a lion couchant for a back somersault.

At the nibble his face twitches, at the bite his knee bends, and then the end of the pole sags quickly downward with the line as taut as a violin string. The eel has taken hold, his throat-pointing teeth are tangled in the thread of the bob, and the stout fisherman's weight has gone far back of his point of support. If the

line should break so would the fisherman's neck.

They prate much to me about the stance and the swing, the addressing and the following through in driving a ball at golf. The words are used glibly, but I doubt if many know their real significance. Whatever that is it all applies, and more, to the proper bobbing of an eel. It is the summoning of all the forces of a man's vigor and personality in one supreme stroke. Holding on, quite literally by the skin of his teeth, the eel circles a section of the pond with his tail and seems to lift it with him. The line sings and the birch pole bends nearly double. It is for a second a question which will win, but the shoemaker's thread is very strong, and so is the stout fisherman.

Suddenly the eel gives up. Still hung to the bob he shoots into the air the full

length of the line, describes a circle in high heaven, of which the fisherman's feet are the center, and drops in the grass, while the fisherman, in marvelous defiance of all laws of gravity, brings his two hundred and fifty pounds back to an upright position without losing his footing. Golf may be all very well, but it does not equal this. Small blame to the fisherman if he poises a moment like Ajax defying the lightning.

Now, the boys have their innings. Somewhere in classic literature the Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold. So the boys upon the eel that flops mightily and wriggles in vain in the tall grass. He is dumped in the deep basket; and hardly is he there before the fisherman has swung another in that mighty circle. An eel is very canny, and often escapes a hook even when well on. I never knew one to

get away from a bob. Sometimes the half-bushel basket would go back home nearly full of them. And as for their size, I do not wish to say, except that no small ones seem to bite at a bob. In that I will quote from Izaak Walton, who, after giving excellent directions for dressing and cooking an eel, says:

"When I go to dress an Eel thus I wish he were as long and as big as that which was caught in Peterborough River in the year 1667, which was a yard and three-quarters long." To which I can but add that I defy old England to produce any bigger eels than we have in New England.

THE VANISHING NIGHT HERONS

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IT is a long time since I have set eyes, in broad daylight, upon the black-crowned night heron, often known as "quawk," and otherwise derisively named by the impuritans. The scientists have also, it seems to me, joined in this derision, for they have dubbed him *Nycticorax nycticorax nævius*, which is a libel on his language. At any rate, it sounds like it. The roots are evidently the same.

Yesterday, however, in broad daylight, I saw two pair sailing down out of the sunlit sky to light on a tree by the border of the pond. Very white they looked in the glare of day, and I wondered at first if four snowy egrets had not escaped the

plume hunters after all and fled north for safety. Probably I shall never see snowy egrets again, though they used to stray north as far as this on occasions. Now, even the night heron, which used to nest hereabout in colonies of hundreds, is rarely seen.

I suppose if bird species must become, one by one, extinct, we can as well afford to lose the night heron as any. He is not a particularly beautiful bird in appearance, though these four seemed handsome enough as they sailed grandly down into the trees on the pond border. His voice is unmelodious. Quawk is only a convenient handle for his one word. It should rather be made up of the roughest consonants in the language, thrown together with raucous vigor. It sounds more like "hwxzvck!" shot into the mud out of a damp cloud. The voices of night herons,

sailing in companies over the marshes and ponds used to sound like echoes of a convocation of witches, falling through damp gloom as broomstick flights went over. Shakespeare named a witch Sycorax. He may have been making game of herons.

To-day, having seen these four, I went down to the places which used to be the old-time haunts of night herons, and looked carefully but in vain for traces of their presence. It is their nesting time. There should be eggs about to hatch, or young about to make prodigious and ungainly growth in singularly flimsy nests that let you see the blue of the eggs faintly visible through the loosely crossed twigs against the blue of the sky. These I did not find, and the big cedars which used to be so populous were lonely enough.

Once there would be a nest in every tree, two-thirds of the way up, and a big

heron sitting on guard at the top of the tree, or astride the eggs on the nest itself. How the long legged mother bird could sit on this loose nest and not resolve it into its component parts and drop the two-inch long eggs to destruction on the peat-moss beneath is still a mystery to me. But she could do it, and the young after they were hatched did it, sometimes six of them, and the nests remained after they were gone, in proof of it. Most birds' nests are marvels of construction; the black-crowned night heron's seems a marvel of lack of it, but I think few of us could make so ill a nest so well.

The night heron's day begins at dusk and ends, as a rule, at daylight. His eyes have all the night-seeing ability of those of the owl, and he finds his way through fog and darkness, and his food as well. Yet the bird seems to see well enough by

day. The four that sailed down to the pond yesterday in the full glare of the afternoon sun had no hesitation about their flight. They swung the corner of the wood and lighted on limbs of the trees with as much directness and certainty as a hawk might. Indeed, when their voracious young are growing up they have to fish night and day. It seems to me that fish must be becoming more plentiful now that the black-crowned night herons are few in number, for a single bird must consume yearly an enormous quantity.

I undertook the care and feeding of two once that I had taken from one of those impossible nests. They were the most solemnly ridiculous young creatures that were ever made. "Man," says Plato, "is a featherless biped." So were these youthful night herons. They were pretty nearly as naked as truth and might have passed

for caricatures of the Puritan conscience, for they were so erect they nearly fell over backward.

They would not stay in any nest made for them, but preferred to inhabit the earth, usually just round the corner of something, whence they poked weird heads with staring eyes that discountenanced all creatures that they met. The family cat, notoriously fond of chicken, stalked them a bit the first day that they occupied the yard. At the psychological moment, when *Felis domesticatus* was crouching, green eyed, for a spring, the two gravely rose and faced her. She took one look at those pods of bodies on stilts, those strange heads stretched high above on attenuated necks, and faced the wooden severity of their stare for but a second. Then she gave forth a yowl of terror and fled to her favorite refuge beneath

the barn, whence she was not known to emerge for a space of twenty-four hours.

There was something so solemn, so "pokerish," so preternaturally dignified about these creatures that they seemed to be out of another, eerier, world. If we ever get so advanced as to travel from planet to planet I shall expect to find things like them peering round corners at me on some of the out-of-the-way satellites, the moons of Neptune, for instance.

Most young birds will eat what you bring them and clamor for more until they are full. These young herons yawned at my approach as solemnly as if they were made of wood and worked by the pulling of a string. Never a sound did I know them to make during their brief stay with me, but they would stand motionless and silent and gape unwinkingly till a piece

of fish was dropped within the yawn. Then it would close deliberately and reopen, the fish having vanished. Fish were plentiful that year and so seemed to be time and bait, and I became curious as to the actual capacity of a growing night heron. I could feed either one till I could see the last piece still in the back of his mouth because there was standing room only. Yet if I went away but for a moment and came back, there they stood, as prodigiously empty as ever. The thing became interesting until I began to discover assorted piles of uneaten fish about the yard, and watching soon showed what was happening.

Foot passengers out in the country have a motto which says, "never refuse a ride; if you do not want it now you may need it next time." This seemed to be the idea which worked sap-wise in the cambium

layers of these wooden young scions of the family *Nycticorax nycticorax nævius.* They never refused a fish. As long as I stood by, their beaks, having closed as well as possible on the very last piece required to stuff them to the tip, would remain closed. After they thought I had gone away they would stalk gravely round a corner, look over the shoulder with an innocence which was peculiarly blear-eyed, then, believing the coast clear, yawn the whole feeding into obscurity in the tall grass. Then they would stalk meditatively forth with hands clasped behind the back, so to speak, and gape for some more.

This was positively the only thing they did except to wait patiently for a chance to do it again, and I soon tired of them and took them back to the rookery, where they were received and, so far as I could see, taken care of, either by their own par-

ents or as orphans at the public expense. It all seemed a matter of supreme indifference to these moon-hoax chicks. There is much controversy as to whether animals act from reason or from instinct. I am convinced that these young night herons contained spiral springs and basswood wheels and that thence came their actions. Probably had I looked them over carefully enough I should have found them inscribed with the motto, "Made in Switzerland."

I fancy many people confound the night heron, known to them only by his wild-witch cry, voiced as he flies over their canoe in the summer dusk, with the great blue heron, which is nearly twice as big a bird. Perhaps I would better say twice as long, in speaking of herons, for bigness has little to do with them. I well remember my amazement as a small boy, coming

out of the woods onto the shore of the pond with a big muzzle-loading army musket under my arm — my first hunting expedition — and scaring up a great blue heron.

I had been reading the "Arabian Nights," and knew that the roc was a great bird that darkened the sun and carried off elephants in his talons. Very well, here was the very bird in full flight before me, darkening the entire cove with his wings. Es-Sindibad of the Sea might be tied to the leg of this one for aught I knew. Mechanically the old musket came to my shoulder and roared, and when I had picked myself up and collected the musket and my senses, there lay the bird on the beach, dead. But he was still an "Arabian Nights'" sort of a bird for one of his dimensions had vanished, his bulk. He was all bill, neck, legs, and feathers,

the wonder being how so small a body could sustain such a spread.

The great blue heron, in spite of his slenderness, which you can interpret as grace or awkwardness, as you will, is a beautiful bird and a welcome addition to the pond shore, the sheltered cove or the sheltered brookside pool which he frequents. If you will come very softly to his accustomed stand you may have a chance to see him sit, erect and motionless, the personification of dignity and vigilance. The very crown of his head is white, but you are more apt to notice the black feathers which border it and draw together behind into a crest which gives a thought of reserved alertness to his motionless pose.

The general impression of his coloring is that of a slaty gray, this melting into brownish on his neck and being prettily

touched with rufous and black on other parts of the body. It is a pleasure to watch his graven-image pose, but it is an even greater one to see him take flight. His long legs bend under him, and he springs forward into the air in a mighty parabola. The wings arch in similar curves and lift him with the very first stroke seemingly a rod in air, and as they arch forward for the second the long outstretched neck draws back and the long legs trail in very faithful reproduction of the ornamentation on a Japanese screen. You hardly feel that here is a living creature, flying away from fear of you. It is rather as if a skillful decorator had magically painted the great bird in on the drop scene in front of you. But the flight of the great blue heron is strong if his body is small in comparison with his other dimensions, and he rapidly rises in the

majesty of power and flaps out of sight over the tree tops.

The great blue heron is not rare, but I think he, too, is much less common than he used to be. Usually he does not summer with us, going farther north, where he nests in colonies. I seem to find him most often in late September or October, when he drops off for a few weeks, a pleasant fishing trip interlude in his flight to winter quarters in the south. But he is here now, and may be met with on most any May morning if you will seek out his haunts.

Fully as common but by no means so noticeable is our little green heron, the third species of the genus that one is apt to see hereabouts. You will usually pass him unnoticed as he sits all day long in the shadow on a limb near the shore. Nor will you be apt to see him until he becomes

convinced that you are about to approach too near. Then, with a little frightened croak, that is more like a squeak, as if his hinges were rusty, he springs into the air, flutters along shore a few rods and disappears into the woods again.

The thought of this little fellow always brings to my mind the silent drowse and quivering heat of August afternoons along a drought-dwindled brook where cardinal flowers lift crimson plumes on the margin of the still remaining pools. Here where deciduous trees shade the winding reaches he loves to sit and wait for the cool of evening before dropping to the margin and hunting his supper.

I always suspect him of being asleep there with his glossy black head thrust under his green wing. That would give him an excuse for being surprised at close quarters and account for his vast alarm

when he does see you. If not I think he would slip quietly away before you got too near as so many birds do that see you in the woods before you see them. But perhaps not; perhaps he trusts to luck and hopes till the very last that you will pass on and leave him to watch his game preserves in peace and decide which fishes and frogs he will find most appetizing. The little green heron is a solitary bird, a very recluse in fact, and I do not recall ever seeing two together. He is a nervous chap, after you have once flushed him, however, and if you watch his flight with care you may see him light, stretch his head high to see if you are following him, meanwhile nervously twitching his apology for a tail.

HARBINGERS OF SUMMER

HARBINGERS OF SUMMER

OUT of the violet dusk of some June dawn you will see the summer coming over the hills from the south and you will know her from the spring at sight. I do not know how. I doubt if the whip-poor-will, who has a jealous eye on the dawn and its signs, for its first appearance means bedtime and surcease from labor for him, knows. Yet he feels her presence, for he waits it as a sign to select the spot for his nest.

The whip-poor-will is hardly a home builder. He just occupies a flat for the summer, a place that seems no more fit for a home than any other flat. Just as I often wonder how apartment-house dwellers find their way back at dinner-time, in

spite of the bewildering sameness of the surroundings, so it seems to me quite miraculous that the whip-poor-will can find the way back to the eggs or young at daybreak. Nest there is none. It is simply a spot picked, seemingly, at random, on the brown last year's leaves, or the bare rock of the pasture.

But the whip-poor-will has been here since early May, and till now has not offered to take an apartment. Yesterday, without doubt, he saw the summer coming and picked his site. By to-morrow or next day you might find the two eggs there — if you are a wizard. It takes such to find a whip-poor-will's eggs. You might look at them and never see them, so well do they match the ground on which they lie, — more like pebbles than anything else, with their dull white obscurely marked with lilac and brownish-gray spots. I

sometimes think the mother bird herself fails to find them and that may be one reason why whip-poor-wills do not seem to increase in numbers.

Like the whip-poor-will the scarlet tanager waits sight of the coming of summer before he begins his nest. It is odd that the two should have even this habit in common, for otherwise they are far apart. The tanager is essentially a bird of the daylight, his very colors born of the sun. I rarely hear him or see his scarlet flame until the sunlight is on his tree top to make him seem all the more vivid. Then as the day waxes, and the robins one by one cease their singing, he takes up their song and continues it, often until the robins return to the choir as the afternoon shadows lengthen. The tanager's song is singularly like that of the robin, only more leisurely and refined. After you have be-

come familiar with it you begin to feel that the robin is a very huckster of a soloist.

"Kill 'im, cure 'im, give 'im physic," is what the early settlers thought the robin sang to them. It always seems to me as if he sang, "Cherries; berries; strawberries. Buy a box; buy a box." You might translate the scarlet tanager's song into either set of words but you would not. Instead, you would ponder long to find a phrase whose gentle refinement should express just the quality of it. Then I think you would give it up, as I always do, content to feel its pure serenity, which is quite beyond words.

The tanager is just about beginning the weaving of his home, which is as gentle and refined in structure as his song. You may see through it if you get just the right position from below, yet it is well built and

strong, woven of slender selected twigs and tendrils, a delicate cup, just big enough to hold the three or four eggs of tender blue with their rufous-brown markings,- and the olive-green mother bird. The tanager's life is as open as the day, and as he watches southward from his pine tree top you may well mark the coming of summer by the beginning of that nest well out on a lower pine bough.

And if you are not fortunate enough to have a tanager in your pine grove you might well take the time from another bird, as different from the scarlet flame of the tree top as the tanager is from the whip-poor-will; that is the wood pewee. As the whip-poor-will loves the darkness and the tanager the bright sun of the top-most boughs of the grove, so the wood pewee loves the resinous depths of the pines, where in the hot twilight of a sum-

mer midday he pipes his cheerful little three-note song. Like the cicada, he seems to sing best when it is hottest, and the thought of his song inevitably brings to mind the drone of the summer-loving insect, the prattle of the brook at the foot of the hill, and the lazy dappling of the sunlight as it falls perpendicularly to the feathery fronds of the cinnamon ferns far below.

He who would find humming birds' nests would do well to first take a course in hunting those of the wood pewee. The two seem to have the same type of mind when it comes to nest-building, though the wood pewee's is five times the size of the other and proportionally easy to find. Each saddles his nest on a limb and covers it outside with gray lichens from the trees nearby, so that from below it looks like merely a lichen-covered knot. As the

wood pewee loves to sing his song in the shadows of the upper levels of the deep pine wood, so he loves to look down as he sings upon his nest on a limb below, usually twenty or more feet from the ground.

Such humming birds' nests as I have found have been made of fern wool or the pappus of the blooms of dandelions or other compositæ just compacted together and lichen-covered. The wood pewee builds of moss and fine fiber, grass and rootlets, using the lichen covering for the outside, as does the humming bird. It is a beautiful nest, a rustic home which perfectly fits the dead pine limb on which you often find it, and its surroundings, a nest as rustic as the grove and the bird.

These two, the tanager and the wood pewee, I know are already picking the limbs for their nests and having an eye

out for available material, for I know that they have had the first word that summer is here. I got it myself from the southerly slope of Blue Hill, a spot to which I like to climb as the lookout goes to the cross-trees, whence the southerly outlook is far and you may sight the sails of spring or summer while yet they are hull down below the horizon of the season.

All creatures love to climb. Here along the rocky path the young gerardias have found a foothold, and put forth strange sinuate or pinnatifid leaves that puzzle you to identify them until you note the last year's stalks and seed-pods, now empty but persistent. Exuberance and young life often take frolicsome ways of expending their vitality. When the gerardias are two months older, and have settled down to the growing of those wonderful yellow bells which fill the woodland with

golden delight, their stem leaves will lose all this riot of outline and coloration and settle down to plain, smooth-edged green. The blossoms may need a foil, but will brook no rival on their own stem.

The path that I take to my southerly looking masthead soon leaves the gerardias behind. They need alluvium and a certain fertility and moisture, and the crevices of the rock are not for them. There as I climb among the cedars I pass the withered stalks of the saxifrage that a month ago made the crevices white. Now only an occasional belated blossom, scraggly and worn as if with dissipation, seems hastening to reach oblivion with its fellows.

But the wild columbine still holds horns of honey plenty for the sipping of moth and butterfly, whose proboscides are long enough to reach the ultimate tip where it

is stored. You may have a mouthful of honey if you will bite off the tiny bulbs at the very ends of these cornucopias, — a honey that has a fragrant sweetness that is unsurpassed in flavor. Nor are the bees behind you in knowledge. They may not reach the honey through the mouth of the horn, but they, too, can bite, and many a flower shows it, now that their season is passing. Their coral red and yellow glows with a rich radiance in the dusk under the cedars, and they have climbed far higher than the gerardias.

With the columbine, right up onto the very ledges themselves, have come the barberry bushes. They must have seen the summer coming, and they were the first to pass the hint on to me, for they have hung themselves with all the gold in their jewel boxes, pendant racemes of exquisite jewel work everywhere, their

sprays of tender green grouping and swaying in the wind, nodding and smiling, decked with earrings, brooches, bracelets, and beads, all cunningly wrought of solid gold. Barberry bushes love the rough pasture and even these rougher rocks, yet they bring to them only grace and elegance and refinement, and receive no hint of uncouthness or barbarity from their surroundings.

These and a score of other herbs and shrubs clamber blithely upward and clothe the rocky hillside with beauty, but the queen of the place is the flowering dogwood. No other shrub has such airy blitheness of decorative beauty. There is something about the set of the leaves that suggests green-clad sprites about to dance for joy, but now every dainty branch is as if thronged with white butterflies, poising for flight. No other plant shows such a

spirituality of delight as this now that it knows that the summer is here. On the plain below the poplars shimmer and quiver translucent green in the ecstasy of young leaves all tremulous with happiness and the tingle of surgent sap. Yet neither tree nor shrub nor any flowering herb seems to so stand on tiptoe for a flight into the blue heaven above, blossom and leaf and branch and trunk, as does this dainty delight of the shady hillside, the flowering dogwood.

The summer does not explode as does the spring. The spring promises and delays, approaches and withdraws, coquettes until we are in despair, then suddenly swoops upon us and smothers in the delight of her full presence. But the summer comes genially and graciously forward, announced by a thousand heralds. To-day you could not find on hillside or

in lowland a spot that did not glow with the fact. On a bare ledge, where the gnarled cedars have held the rim of the hill all winter long against the gales and zero weather, I thought I might find a pause in the universal story. Here should be only gray rock and a rim of brown cedars, as much the furniture of winter as of summer. But I had forgotten the outlook.

On the fields far below, the tall grass, so green that it was fairly blue in comparison with the yellow of young leaves, rushed forward before the wind like a green flood of roaring water. Across the plain and up the slopes it poured as the waters of Niagara pour down the slope to the brink of the fall. Even the white foam of the rapids was simulated in the silvery-green flashes that raced with the breeze. Only summer grass thus flows.

No other season can give it such vivid motion.

To me there came too a dozen summer messengers. Two or three varieties of transparent winged dragon flies swirled in and out of the little bay of sunshine. A fulvous and black butterfly lighted on the rock at my feet and gently, rhythmically raised and lowered his wings. It was as expressive of satisfaction as smacking the lips would be. Again and again he slipped away and then sailed back, leaving me still in doubt as to whether he was the lovely little *Melitæa harrisi*, or *Phyciodes nycteis*, both of which are very solemn names for pretty little butterflies which fly about as a signal that summer is already beginning to glow about us.

By and by the joy of the spot seemed to soothe him and he settled down for a longer stay, folding his wings and proving

to me that he was *nycteis* without question, for there on his hind wing was distinctly the mark of the silver crescent. Butterflies should have been popular when knighthood was in flower, for each carries the heraldic blazon of his house where all may see.

Soon I found my seat on the rock disputed by a pair of dusky-wings. I had found the earlier dusky-wings of the woodland paths skittish and unwilling to let me get to close quarters with them. This may have been because I made the advances. I had been seated but a moment when this pair that had dashed madly away at my approach dashed as madly back and very nearly lighted on me, then they dashed away again.

Soon, however, they came back in more friendly fashion and settled down within reach of my hand, where I could observe

them at leisure. Then I saw that this was to me a new variety of the dusky-wing, the *Thanaos persius* instead of *Thanaos brizo*, as I had thought. *Persius'* dusky-wing had climbed the hill as I had, to see if summer was coming, and had found it here. The pale corydalis which nodded columbine-like heads of softest coral red and yellow knew it too, and drowsed in the sunshine as did the butterflies, but I went on, seeking more evidence.

On the shore of Hoosic-whissic Pond a wood thrush sits on her nest in a green-brier clump, within ten feet of noisy picnickers. Bravely she sits and shields her eggs, nor does she stir for all the riot about her. I poked my head within the tangle till my face was within two feet of her, and still she did not move. Her throat swelled a little, and a questioning look came into her eyes.

The wood thrush is a shy bird at ordinary times, but not when sitting on her nest. Then she seems to suddenly acquire a modest boldness that is as becoming as the gentle shyness of other times. We looked at one another in mutual friendliness. I noted the bright cinnamon brown of the head fading on the back to a soft olive brown, the whole having the smoothness and perfect fit of a lady's glove. The white throat and some of the black markings on the white breast were visible above the rim of the nest, and her bill pointed skyward in the trustful, prayerful attitude of all birds on the nest. Brooding maternity has the same prayerful sweetness of attitude in the wood thrush that it has in the human mother. It always suggests white hands clasped and raised in prayer and thanksgiving.

While I watched the wood thrush, a

quick gleam of gold and black caught my eye as it danced by in the sunshine outside the thicket. Here was a promise of summer, indeed, and I followed it on, leaving the brooding thrush to her happiness. It led across the open, sandy plain to the south, and into the deep wood beyond. On the way the cinquefoil and buttercups, the strawberry blossoms and the running blackberries were gay with fluttering little red butterflies, the coppers and the crescent spots, and whites and blues, a kaleidoscope of shifting colors, but it was not until I got into the deep golden shade of the dense wood that I saw the fulfilment of the promise.

Here in the glow of sunlight so strained and etherealized by passing through fluttering green that it was all one mist of color, a vivid heart of chrysoprase, I found the wood full of great yellow butter-

flies, dozens of them dancing up and down in the soft radiance, and lighting to put gorgeous yellow blossoms on twigs that could never put forth such beauty again. Here was the summer, coming sedately through the gold-green spaces of the wood with scores of golden spirits dancing joyously about her. The "tiger swallowtail," *Papilio turnus*, as the lepidopterists have named him, is the most beautiful of all our butterflies, painted in gold with black margins, and a single touch of scarlet cunningly applied to each wing. All the glow of summer seems to be concentrated in him, and his presence is the final test of hers.

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